# MODERN HINDUISM.

# MODERN HINDUISM:

*AN ACCOUNT OF THE RELIGION AND LIFE OF THE HINDUS IN NORTHERN INDIA.*

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# INTRODUCTION.

In a former work * I have given, as far as possible in the language of their sacred books, an account of the deities commonly worshipped by the Hindus of Northern India. In this I propose to give an account of their life, which is largely the result of the worship of those deities. Having lived for many years in India and met with all classes of the community in the cities and in the villages, I have learned much that is not found in books written on this most interesting subject. I have read much that has been written by Europeans and Bengalis; and in conversation with priests and pundits tested the accuracy of many statements made in these works, so that what is found in these pages may be accepted as trustworthy. In this, as in my former book, I have abstained from comment; my work here is rather that of a chronicler than of a preacher. In writing of its mythology, I felt that the

* "Hindu Mythology—Vedic and Purānic." Thacker and Co., Newgate Street; and Thacker, Spink, and Co., Calcutta.

most powerful refutation of Hinduism was a fair statement of what its books teach concerning the character of the beings worshipped as divine; and in describing the every-day life of the Hindus, there seems little necessity for comment.

It may appear strange to find some subjects treated of in this book, which professes to be an account of religion; but it must be borne in mind that, with the Hindu, religion is not a thing for times and seasons only, but professes to regulate his life in its many relations. It orders ceremonies to be performed on his behalf before he is born, and others after his death. It ordains those attendant on his birth, his early training, his food, his style of dress and its manufacture, his employment, marriage, amusements. It seeks to regulate not only his private life, but also his domestic and national. To treat of the ordinary life of the Hindu is to describe his religion.

It should be remembered that descriptions true of certain classes or of certain districts may not be correct of other classes or other districts; and that frequently the residents of one district are totally ignorant of what prevails in others. This can scarcely be wondered at when we consider the number of books which are accepted by the people as divinely given for authorities concerning the gods and the religious life. The people of one district are familiar with only a small part of one

book, whilst those of other districts found their faiths on other books or different parts of the same. In addition to this it must not be forgotten that a century ago there was no prose literature, no newspapers, magazines, or novels; whilst the theatrical representations were almost entirely confined to mythological subjects. It is no uncommon thing to find a custom in the home, or a ceremony in worship, supported by quite different authorities by different people. When, therefore, we hear of certain things being believed or done by Hindus we are inclined to question the accuracy of the speaker, it is well to inquire whether it is not our limited knowledge that is at fault. The sacred writings are full of contradictions, and the beliefs and practices of the people widely differ.

Many books have already been written on this subject, but it is not exhausted. Any one living amongst the people with the seeing eye may witness much that has never been described in print. And it is the duty of the observant to note these things, for in India, as elsewhere, "the old order changeth, giving place to new." As Hinduism loses its hold upon the popular heart, and purer faiths are adopted, many things now patent to the observer will cease to be. Men visiting certain isles of the Pacific search in vain for traces of the old idolatries; men nowadays visit the scenes of child murder and sati in India, but are

dependent upon the stories of eye-witnesses, who have passed away, for descriptions of these obsolete customs; so will it be with many of the common forms of Hinduism. In the mean time, that those who come after us may know the form the religious life of the past assumed, it is the duty of those who have seen this gigantic system in full force and activity faithfully to describe what their "eyes have seen, and their ears have heard."

W. J. W.

1887.

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## PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

THIS edition to a large extent is a reproduction of the former one, but not entirely so. Parts have been re-written, parts condensed, considerable changes in the arrangement of the chapters have been made, and the whole has been carefully revised. In its present form it is hoped that it will prove even more acceptable than in its original one.

W. J. W.

1900.

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## CHAPTER I.

### BIRTH AND ITS CEREMONIES.

THE well-known lines of Wordsworth—

"Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting;
The soul that rises with us, our life's star
Hath had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar;
Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God who is our home,"

are in perfect harmony with the spirit of Hinduism; hence it teaches that before a child is ushered into the world certain ceremonies should be performed on its behalf. About four months before its birth there is the Uncooked Food ceremony. The astrologer having been consulted on this, as on other important occasions, and a suitable day having been fixed by him, restrictions respecting food, at other times rigorously observed by the expectant mother, are removed, and she is permitted to eat fruits, preserves, pickles, etc., rice and grain only being prohibited. Two months later comes the Cooked Food ceremony, when she with a few lady friends, whose husbands and children are living, is permitted to eat

parched peas, rice, and cooked sweetmeats. A month later still the Panchāmrita festival is held. This name is given to it because the five delicacies supposed to form the food of the gods, viz. milk, ghi, curds, honey, and cow-dung, are set before her, though she is permitted to eat only fruit and sweetmeats, a little of which is put into her mouth by the officiating priest. She is gaily dressed in a red-bordered sāri, or cloth, which is carefully guarded, lest any unfortunate mother who has lost her children should carry off any part of it, as injury to it would be ominous of evil to her child. A day is then fixed, as near as possible to the expected day of birth, for the final and more elaborate feast.

At this festival, the lady relatives of the family are invited, and a liberal supply of food provided. In order to make the day as lively as possible, dancing girls are engaged. In former years (and in some places even now) the songs and dances were of an indecent character, but nowadays this objectionable element of the feast is usually absent. When all is ready, the lady, beautifully dressed, and adorned with jewels, is placed in the centre of the apartment, whilst her guests sit in rows on either side. A light burns in front of her, the sacred conch shell is sounded, and a rupee, which has touched her forehead, is offered to the gods on her behalf to ensure a safe issue from her coming trouble. The guests then partake of a sumptuous feast, and, as soon as it is over, hurry away to their homes before darkness sets in. As the giver of the feast is expected to provide palanquins and other conveyances to bring her guests and take them home, where these are not sufficient to take all at once, there is often a lively scene as the ladies try to get the first use of them. It is customary for those

who have participated in the feast to send presents to the lady whom they came to congratulate.

So great is the mortality of Hindu women at child-birth, that this event has obtained the name of the Hundredfold-dreaded (Satasanka); and many of the friends regard their presents as farewell gifts. According to a proverb, the ordinary life of a woman, being sedentary, and comparatively idle, is preferable to that of a man; the dread of motherhood, however, is an equivalent to the cares and toils of manhood, so that men are content to remain men.

Excepting on these high days of festival, the expectant mother is under many restrictions, and her fear of the coming event is sufficiently great to lead her carefully to observe them. As a rule, a Hindu wife is not more than thirteen years of age when her first child is born, sometimes she is even younger, and is attended by an untrained midwife, who is unable to render real assistance when there may be special need. It is not surprising, therefore, that a young wife should fear what is before her. Amongst the many regulations imposed upon her, the following may be mentioned. She must not wear clothes over which birds have flown. She must wear a knot in her dress (sāri) where it is fastened round her waist. In order to avoid the contact of evil spirits, she must not walk or sit in the open courtyard of her house, and must wear a thin reed five inches long in her hair. As a means of easily getting through her trouble, she has to wear an amulet round her neck, containing flowers consecrated to Baba Thākur, a deity worshipped chiefly by the lower orders of the people; and must drink daily a few drops of water that have touched this charm.

When the hour of birth draws near, as a mother is

ceremonially unclean for three weeks if she have given birth to a son, and if to a daughter for a month, her touch is defiling, and she cannot remain in the house. A shed is therefore provided for her temporary home. In the houses of the poor the lumber-room is generally used; whilst in the large mansions a separate building is kept for this purpose. These places are destitute of furniture, a little straw being spread for the woman to lie upon. Here she must remain until the day of her purification, and, although it is admitted that under favourable circumstances there is great risk to her life, the proceedings in the lying-in room seem calculated to increase it. The skull of a cow smeared with red paint is reared against the wall to drive away evil spirits. An image of Sasthi, the goddess who presides over married women and children, made of cow-dung, is placed in a conspicuous position and specially honoured. During all this time neither husband nor father, sister nor mother, may touch her, lest they be defiled, the poor woman being left entirely to the tender mercies of a barber's wife, whose reign is supreme over her and her child. When European ladies try to induce the friends to show a little more consideration to the invalid, their entreaties are met by the assurance that any departure from the custom of ages would anger Sasthi. This goddess is all-powerful over the superstitious minds of the Hindu woman. If a child die soon after its birth, it is Sasthi who has removed it; if a mother is blessed with living sons, it is Sasthi who must be praised.

As so much is said in this chapter about Sasthi, it will not be out of place to give a brief account of her. She is called "Sasthi, or the Sixth," because she is believed to be the sixth part of the divine essence of *Pradhāna Prakriti*, the male and female creative

principles by whose influence the universe has been produced. The following legend is related in connection with her worship: "Priyavrata, the son of Svayambhū Manu, who had spent many years in enthusiastic and solitary devotion, was at last persuaded by Brahmā to contract the bonds of matrimony. But as his wife did not present him with offspring, he desired the divine sage Kasyapa to celebrate the *putreshti-yāga*. The sage gave her the sacrificial charm (rice cooked in clarified butter), and she became *enceinte*, and in due time brought forth a son bright as gold, but still-born. The king took the body and laid it on the funeral pile. On a sudden, however, a goddess of surpassing beauty appeared overhead, radiant in the summer sun. The king, entranced, asked her name. The goddess said, 'I am the wife of Kartikheya, the chief of mothers, and as I am the sixth part of *Prakriti*, men call me Sasthi.' So saying, she took hold of the child, gave it breath and life, and made a gesture as if she was going to take it away to the realms of glory. The king, petrified with fear, besought her to restore the infant to him. The goddess, pleased with the incense of praise, said, 'O thou son of Svayambhū Manu, thou art the lord of the three worlds. If thou promise to celebrate my praise as long as thou livest, I will give the child to thee.' As a grateful return for her favour, he celebrated the worship of Sasthi with the utmost pomp. From that time her worship became one of the most popular institutions in the land of Bharat (India). The proper image of Sasthi is a woman of matronly appearance, painted yellow, riding on a cat, and nursing a child; but usually she is represented by a rude stone, not bigger than a man's head, painted with red-lead, and placed under a *vata* tree in the outskirts of the village; whilst not

unfrequently she is worshipped in the form of a branch of the *vata* tree stuck in the yard of a house." *

If the room in which the young mother is placed is bare and uncomfortable, the means used for her recovery are painful too. A drink made of pepper, chillies, etc., is given her to drink; in the hottest months of the year a fire is lighted, near which she is made to lie; and until the fifth day after the birth of the child no attempt is made to clean the place. The child, too, has a warm reception; from head to foot it is smeared with hot mustard oil, and, for hours daily, is placed in the bright sunshine. In former times, if a child did not thrive under this treatment, and refused to take nourishment from its mother, it was a common practice to hang it in a basket on a tree to die.

There is another mode of treatment coming into fashion, though for the most part it is amongst the worshippers of Vishnu, but as it too can claim authority from the sacred writings, it is to be hoped it will soon be universal. It is believed that this plan has the special approval of the god Krishna. Hot spicy drinks are not forced upon the mother, nor is a fire made to scorch her. She is allowed to drink cooling draughts, and little restriction is placed upon her diet. A day or two after the birth of the child, Krishna is worshipped by the grateful mother, and sweetmeats are distributed to the children of the neighbourhood. It is said that those who adopt this method come through their troubles without harm: when this is generally known it will not be surprising if the Krishna method supplants the Sasthi.

The earnest desire of every Hindu wife is that she may have a son. According to the popular idea, whilst

* "Bengal Peasant Life," p. 44.

daughters are a source of anxiety and expense to their parents, sons form their strength and support. One of their proverbs expresses this very clearly, "Blind sons support their parents, but a prince's daughters extort money from them." The deepest root of this desire is the fact that the last religious rites can be most successfully performed by their male descendants. In the Mahābhārata is a story conveying this lesson. A Hindu remained unmarried for years after he had attained to manhood. Passing through the spirit-world, he saw a number of men hanging by their heels from the branch of a tree, with their heads overhanging a deep precipice, whilst rats were gnawing the ropes which bound them, in momentary fear of being dashed to pieces. On inquiry he was told that they were his ancestors, doomed to suffer because he had failed to procure a son whose proper performance of their funeral ceremonies would have saved them from pain. The words of Jesus, "a woman remembereth no more the anguish for joy that a man is born into the world," exactly express the experience of the mothers in India. A childless wife is an object of ridicule, whilst a mother of girls is believed to have offended the gods. Hence the young wife is buoyed up with the hope that she will soon have a son in her arms. When, instead of this, a girl is born, though for a little time she may be deceived, the truth soon comes out. On the birth of a son the conch shell, with its trumpet-like notes, invites the neighbours to rejoice with the happy parents; whereas when a daughter is born it is silent, and, instead of congratulation, condolences are offered. Though at first the sense of disappointment is keen, maternal instincts prevail, and the little daughter is welcomed to the mother's heart.

The food to be eaten by the mother whilst occupying the lying-in room is arranged by law, even to the one grain of boiled rice allowed on the third day after her child's birth. Nothing of importance takes place until the fifth day, when the room is cleaned, and its occupant made more comfortable. On the following day Sasthi is specially worshipped, and praises presented to her for preserving and giving life. During this night a very important event is supposed to take place, viz. the fixing of the child's destiny, the arranging of its future life. Vidhātā, a form of Brahmā, visits the room, and writes upon its forehead the main events of its life. Before the sun goes down great preparation is made for this divine visitor. A palm leaf, pen and ink, a snake's skin, a brick from a temple of Siva, money, and other things are placed in readiness; and, lest the deity should feel slighted if there was no one awake to receive him, and in his anger write a long list of calamities, it devolves upon the midwife to keep this solemn vigil. If Vidhātā is propitious, a life of prosperity will be arranged; if angry, suffering and loss will be the child's experience through life. "It is written on my forehead," is frequently given as a sufficient explanation of any painful experience. This largely accounts for their stoical endurance of pain, disappointment, and loss that is so noticeable. What Vidhātā has written must come to pass; it is useless, therefore, to oppose the inevitable.

In "Bengal Peasant Life," Mr. L. B. Dey gives a typical account that the midwives relate of what takes place on this eventful night. "I heard the sound of footsteps at the door, especially on that side where the pen and ink were. The same footfall was heard along the passage from the door to where the baby was sleeping by his mother. Immediately after, I heard a sound

similar to that which is made by a man when writing, but I saw no figure. By the light of the fire, however, I saw a smile playing on the lips of the baby. Shortly after, I heard the sound of retreating footsteps, and rushed towards the door and said, '*Thākur!* I hope you have written favourably.' The god knew me well, as he had often seen me, and told me what he had written on the forehead of the child, but on condition of the strictest secrecy. I dare not disclose it to you; if I did, Vidhātā will be angry, and kill me outright by twisting my neck; but rejoice, for the child's forehead is good."

When the child is eight days old, the Atkauri ceremony takes place, so called because eight kinds of peas, rice, etc., are distributed. Children from the neighbourhood come near the room where the mother and child are lying, and, after knocking at the door with their fans, inquire after the child's health; and on being told that it is well, they reply, "Let it rest in peace in its mother's arms." Led on by the elder folk, they indulge in a little joking at the father's expense, after which they are regaled with sweetmeats.

When the three weeks (or, in the case of girls, a month) have passed by, the ceremonies for the purification of the mother are proceeded with, of which Miss Leslie, in the "Dawn of Light," gives the following account: "Her nails were cut, her hair tied up; she was put in a palanquin, the bedding having been taken out, and carried to the river, a distance of six miles. The bearers waded into the stream with their burden as far as they could go, and the sacred waters gushed in, around, and upon her, shut up in her dark box. She was then carried back all those six miles in her wet clothes, and such was the efficacy of the bath, that from that time she was reckoned ceremonially clean. The

neighbours were feasted with sweetmeats, and worship was offered to the goddess Sasthi." In addition to the feasting at the house, twenty-one small baskets, filled with parched rice, plantains, sugar-cane, etc., are sent to married women whose husbands are still living. The goddess Subhachini, a form of Durgā, is also worshipped. The reason of this is given in the following legend. A poor Brāhman boy saw a fish-woman carrying fish for sale, and he began to cry because he could not buy it. The woman, moved by his tears, gave him some, and said she would call for the money on her way home. The fish was cooked, but as the mother had no money to pay for it, the fish-wife took it back. Though the boy lost the fish, he tasted the water in which it had been boiled, and was so delighted with its flavour, that he could not resist the temptation of stealing a lame duck belonging to the king. The duck was missed, investigation made, and the culprit was tried, condemned, and imprisoned. His mother was almost beside herself with grief. Durgā, in the form of Subhachini, appeared to her in a dream, and advised her to worship her under this name. She did so, and, as part of the ceremony, made seventeen ducks of rice paste, one of which had a lame leg. At its close, some holy water that had been brought for the sacrifice fell upon the feathers of the stolen bird; and although the boy had eaten its flesh, it came back to life, and was sent to its royal owner. He called for the mother, who told him the wonderful story; whereupon he ordered the release of the boy, and gave him his daughter in marriage. Subhachini is associated with Sasthi, in the hope that she will take the child under her especial care, and rescue him from the difficulties that may beset him in life.

When a boy is six months old, his name is formally

given, and a festival called Annaprasan, or rice-eating, is observed. The child, beautifully dressed and decorated with jewels, is brought into the guest-chamber, and a few grains of cooked rice are put into his mouth. In some families the rice used on these occasions is purchased from one of the great temples; when this is not done, Brāhmans are fed, and laden with presents to purchase their goodwill. At this feast, the father presents a little food for the benefit of his ancestors as a thank-offering.

The name-giving, however, is the important event. The father proclaims it, though it is generally the mother who chooses it. "What's in a name?" asks Shakespeare; in Oriental lands there is usually a great deal. Hannah by calling her son Samuel tells the story of her long years of sadness because she had no son, and of her thankfulness when one was given her. And a similar experience is suggested by the names of thousands in India to-day. One illustration of this may be given out of many. A Brāhman and his wife had lived together for years, but were childless. Their bliss was greatly marred by this circumstance. The husband hinted that the time had come for him to supersede the wife of his youth. Many prayers were offered and gifts bestowed, but all in vain. As a last resource, a pilgrimage to Kālighat was made, and a vow registered that if a son were born within a certain time, money should be given to the shrine. In due course their hearts' desire was granted. In the name Kāli Prasād (by the favour of Kāli) which was given to their boy, the sad story of their married life is told.

As a rule the names are those of some of the deities, or the deified heroes whose deeds of prowess are written in the Rāmāyana and Mahābhārata. Sometimes the

humility of the parents is seen as they call their children the servants of some of the gods or goddesses, as, Durgā Dāss, Kāli Dāss. A child never bears the same name as his father. Girls are named after goddesses, as Lakshmi, Gangā, etc.; or after flowers, as Padma (a lotus) and Kāmini. A strange practice prevails where a number of children have been taken away by death. Instead of calling the later arrivals by the names of the deities, one is called Dukhi (pain), another Tiu Kauri (three cowry shells), Hāran (the lost one), etc., the idea being that when Yama, the god of Death, stalks by, noose in hand, seeking victims, and asks, Who goes there?—hearing such names as these, he will pass them as unworthy of notice. In after years, when this device has served its purpose, they may be exchanged for others.

In addition to the name chosen by the parents, another is selected by the astrologer, which has as its initial a letter from the particular star that ruled at the hour of its birth. A child, *e.g.*, born in the last division of Virgo's rule, whose ordinary name is Gopāl, appears in ceremonial documents, say, as Thākur Dāss, because Th is the last letter of the Sanskrit word for Virgo. Whilst speaking of names, it may be stated that though Hindus bear a family name in addition to those given, they are not generally known by it. Excepting in places where European customs prevail, a man named Hari Narāyana Banerjea would seldom be called so, but Hari Narāyana, the family name being dropped in ordinary conversation. And when a student obtains a title from the Sanskrit colleges, the title is taken as a surname in place of the family name.

Perhaps the most important ceremony connected with the birth of a Hindu child is the preparation of his

horoscope. The moment of birth is carefully noted, and from this the astrologer prepares a more or less elaborate forecast of the child's fate. The chief service that this document serves in after life, where births are not registered by Government officials, is to determine the age of its owner. In courts of law it is accepted for this purpose. Where evils are indicated or good foretold in this prophetic scroll, the Hindu seeks deliverance from the one and to gain the other by liberal donations to the gods. It seems strange, perhaps, that men should trust to these guesses, but the desire to penetrate into the future is almost universal. Important events are sometimes determined by what was written by the astrologers ; marriage arrangements are broken off when, by the horoscopes of the intended bride and bridegroom, it is found that they were born under mutually hostile stars.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE HOME.

In order rightly to understand the family life of the Hindus, it is necessary to banish the ideas that cling round the word home as it is used in England.

On his marriage, an Englishman sets up an establishment of his own. The Hindu conducts his bride to his father's house, in which a room is provided for her. And whilst she is under the control of the senior lady in his family, and finds her society amongst the other ladies, he is subject to his father and passes his time with the gentlemen, as he did before his wife came there. The members of the middle and upper classes consider it contrary to their ideas of propriety for a wife to be left alone in a house when her husband is at business. And as it often happens a man's work is at a distance from the house of his family, he does not take his wife with him. He goes to his appointment, and pays a visit to his home as frequently as circumstances permit.

The Hindu family house is in the form of a quadrangle, with an open courtyard in the centre. Opposite the entrance gate is a platform on which images made for the festivals in honour of the various deities are placed. On the ground floor the rooms to right and left of the courtyard are used as store-rooms, etc.; and over them are the public reception rooms. These are

generally well furnished, and are used by the male members of the family only. Except at feasts, the meals are not taken here, unless there happen to be visitors who are not admitted into the more private portion of the house. At the back of the courtyard a passage leads into a second and smaller yard, which is also surrounded by rooms. It is here that the lady members of the family live. Here, too, are the dining-room and the sleeping apartments. The inner rooms are generally small, and the windows are also small and high, for Manu declared that it was not right for a "woman to look out of the windows." During the day the gentlemen occupy the public rooms, transacting their business, or amusing themselves, whilst the women in their part of the house are engaged in household duties or in their own forms of recreation. It is indecorous for a man to speak to his wife during the day, their only time for conversation is when they retire to their own apartment. And it is improper for a woman to look at or address her husband's elder brothers. At their meals husband and wife do not sit down together; but the wife waits upon her lord, and eats when he has finished. When it is remembered that in some of these mansions hundreds of people live together, it will be clearly seen how vast is the difference between a Hindu and an English home. Few things in England seem to please Hindus more than our family life.

Of course the bulk of the people do not live in these palatial dwellings. The houses of the ryots, or small farmers, and the working classes will now be described. Many of the people cannot afford to live in even this style, and the women are not kept in seclusion. "You enter the house with your face to the east, through a small door of mango wood in the street, and you go

at once to the *uthàn*, or open yard, which is indispensable to the house of every peasant in the country. On the west side of the yard, on the same side as the gate, . . . stands the *bara ghar*, or big hut. This is the biggest, the neatest, and most elaborately finished of all Badan's huts. Its walls, which are of mud, are of great thickness; the thatch, which is of the straw of paddy, is more than a cubit deep; the bamboo framework, on which the thatch is laid, is well compacted together, every interstice being filled with the long and slender reed called sārā, alternating with another of red colour; the middle beam, which supports the thatch, though it is not made of the costly teak or sāl, is made of the palmyra, and the floor is raised at least five feet from the ground. The hut is about sixteen cubits long, and twelve broad, including the verandah, which faces the yard, and which is supported by props of palmyra. It is divided into two compartments of unequal size, the bigger one being Badan's sleeping-room, and the smaller one being the store-room of the family. . . . The verandah is the parlour of the family. There friends and acquaintances sit on mats. In Badan's sleeping-room are kept the brass vessels of the house and other valuables. There is no bedstead in it, for Badan sleeps on the mud floor, a mat and a quilt stuffed with cotton interposing between his body and mother earth. There is not much light in the room, for the thatch of the verandah (coming down very near the ground) prevents its admission, while there is but one small window high up in the wall towards the street. I need scarcely add that there is no furniture in the room: . . . there is only, in one corner, a solitary box. In one side of the room two whole bamboos are stuck into the walls, on which clothes are hung, and on which the bedding is put up in the day.

"On the south side of the yard, and at right angles to the big hut, is a smaller hut of far inferior construction, which . . . is used as a lumber-room, or rather as a tool-room, for keeping the implements of husbandry. . . . In the verandah of this little hut is placed the *dhenki*, or rice-husking pedal. From this circumstance the little hut is called the *Dhenkisālā*.

"In the south-east corner of the yard, and at right angles to the Dhenkisāla, is another hut of somewhat better construction, in which Gayarāma (Badan's brother) sleeps, and a verandah which serves the purpose of a kitchen. . . . The only other hut on the premises is the cow-house, . . . situated to the north of the yard, nearly parallel to the big hut. . . . The eastern side of the premises opens on a tank." *

As the houses differ, the Hindu family system is, if possible, more unlike anything that prevails amongst us. It is a patriarchal system pure and simple. How long it has been in vogue it is impossible to say, but it was probably brought with the Aryan immigrants from their home in Central Asia. It has all the force of a religious institution. "Religion shaped itself according to the wishes of the legislator, and thus what was intrinsically useful became a legal and religious institution of the land." And it is interesting to see that sacred texts are found to support a system which, but for this, would long ago have passed away. The text of Manu, which is held to teach authoritatively on this subject, is the following: "Three persons, a wife, a son, and a slave, are declared by law to have in general no wealth of their own; the wealth which they may earn is regularly acquired for the man to whom they belong." And Nārada, another authority, declares of a son: "He is of

* "Bengal Peasant Life," p. 28.

age and independent in case his parents be dead; during their lifetime he is dependent, even though he is grown old."

The Hindu family system may be described as a sort of Joint Stock Company, in which the head of the family is managing director, with almost unlimited powers; or as a little kingdom, in which he is an almost absolute sovereign. The sons, grandsons, nephews, who form the family, regard their earnings as belonging to the common treasury; and their expenditure is under the direct control of the karta, or head. Thus it happens that when several members of the family are absent from home engaged in various ways, the balance of their salaries or profits must be remitted to the karta. This has its advantages and its disadvantages. There is a home where a man can leave his wife with confidence when he is hundreds of miles away engaged in business, or filling some Government appointment. This, to the Hindu, who would not deem it wise to have his family with him in an ordinary house, is an immense comfort. Once a year he takes leave, and spends a few days with his family. There is also the certainty of support in case of sickness or permanent incapacity for work. But it has its drawbacks too. An idle, worthless son has no necessity laid upon him to work; he can obtain the necessaries of life without it; and many families have one or more members who are mere parasites. Often, however, the idle son is not altogether without his place. If he will not or cannot earn money, it is something if he look after the domestic and family matters, and afford protection to the ladies. Where the head of the family is growing old, the sons take it in turn to remain at home, perhaps for a year at a time; or the one who has the worst prospects will resign his appointment.

In a description of the members of the family, the

karta, or head, must first be considered. This will generally be the father, or grandfather, of the present generation of workers. Until recent years the whole earnings of the family was under his absolute control, and without his sanction no important transaction could be settled. All sales and purchases of property would be in his name, and it is he who arranges for the marriage of the children. The following description of the karta is by a Hindu gentleman: "In his habiliments he is all simplicity. An ordinary cloth of five yards in length constitutes his usual costume. When he goes out he takes an additional piece of cloth to wrap his trunk with. To wear heeled shoes or boots is inconsistent with his venerable position, and he prefers loose slippers. It is his habit to shave his head and face clean, leaving only a tuft of hair about the centre of his head unshaved. This and a bead necklace mark him as a Hindu, and are prized by him as Hindu distinctions. The only perfumery he uses is mustard oil. . . . His education is not of a high order. He can read and write, and such of his children as are mindful of their studies are his especial favourites. Devoid of a liberal education himself, he is possessed of strong common sense, and his judgments generally smack of practical wisdom. . . . The authors of the Rāmāyana and Mahābhārata are his great pets, and the stories contained in those works delight his imagination.

"For literary and philosophical culture he greatly depends on the priest, versed in ancient lore. He accepts the truths enunciated by him without question or cavil, and stores them up in his mind. . . . The only science he cares for is arithmetic, in the knowledge of which he is generally profound. . . . In bookkeeping, too, he has some experience.

"In regard to morals, the karta knows that falsehood is a sin. Evasion and equivocation sometimes are his practices when direct falsehood is impossible. To avert loss or injury he may tell an untruth. His self-love verges on selfishness, though he is just and fair in his dealings. . . . Servile obedience is constitutional with him when he has to deal with superiors in office. Flattery is the oil he uses to soften their minds. He is possessed of plenty of gratitude to those who have benefited him; but his hatred towards his enemies is implacable." * Of course, it is the Bengali of the old school whose picture has here been drawn; the young men of the present generation, when their turn comes to reign, will manifest a different character.

When the head of the family dies his younger brother may take his place; or if he has no brother, his eldest son will rise to this dignity; but as a rule it is not until a man has attained to a good age that he becomes a karta. And such is the respect shown to the position that an elder brother will exercise as much authority over his brothers, who may be but a year or two younger than himself, as his father had done before him. In the present age, when the younger members of a family will not submit to the authority of an elder brother, a partition of the property is made; but frequently before this is agreed upon a good part of the estate has been squandered in litigation.

Next in authority to the karta is the grihini, or chief wife in the family. This may be the wife or it may be the mother of the karta. In all matters relating to the management of the house, and to the conduct of the female members of the family, her influence is as great as that of the karta in all that concerns the men. She

* "The Hindu Family System," p. 18.

may consult the head of the family, but this is by no means an invariable rule. She superintends, if she does not actually do, the cooking, and it is quite possible for her to make the home a happy or miserable one for the younger women. "The grihini leads a life of self-denial. Her personal comforts are few [when, as frequently happens, she is a widow]. She lives upon the coarsest of meals and wears the commonest of raiment. She works from morn till night. She fasts twice or thrice a month, and keeps vigils for securing the blessing of the gods towards her children, and, to make assurance doubly sure, commands her daughters and daughters-in-law to do the same. . . . It is her pride to enforce purity and cleanliness with the utmost rigour. She bathes and changes her clothes half a dozen times a day. If she is cooking, she must wear clothes that have been washed and dried in the sun. When in the store-room she must have another suit to wear. Should she be preparing the offerings for the household god there is another change of her habiliments. . . . The house is washed many times a day, and the cooking utensils undergo the pangs of constant friction." . . . And other members of the family must follow her lead. Added to all this is the observance of religious festivals, the main object of which is to secure the prosperity of the family.

In cases where the husband is dead it sometimes happens that the widow has charge of the family property, and legal affairs are conducted in her name.

Next to the karta and grihini come the sons and their wives. It is evident, from what has gone before, that their position is a subordinate one. Though the sons may earn the money by which the family is supported, and their wives may have a fair share of the daily work of the home, in its management they have little power.

The only resource that is open to a son's wife when her husband's family make things unpleasant is to complain at night to her husband, and to go for a longer or shorter visit to her father's house. And if all one hears of these matters is correct, when the husband is absent for a year or two at a time the position of some of these women is anything but enviable. The bulk of them, being uneducated, cannot even apprise their husbands of what is troubling them at home; but many of the present generation, having learned to write, are able to find some relief in pouring out their griefs to their husbands and in receiving cheering letters in reply.

There is, however, one thing to be said in favour of this family system: there is no poor law, and there are no poor-houses in India. The weaker members of the family find shelter and maintenance at the expense of the more healthy ones. Occasionally men belonging to respectable families may lead vagabond lives; but though the idle are not always treated kindly, it would be considered a disgrace for them to be in actual want; to avoid this scandal, food and home are given to those who would be better were they forced to toil.

An account of the Hindu family would be incomplete were no notice taken of the family priest. Every well-appointed house has a shrine with its image or some representation of the family god. The karta, unless he be a Brāhman, cannot officiate; for this purpose he must engage a priest, whose duty it is to bathe and anoint the idol, recite the ritual, and make the offerings of fruits and flowers that the family present. Occasionally the head or other members of the family may be present during this worship; but, as a rule, the priest is alone, and receives as his perquisite the offerings that are given to the idol. In some cases there may be a piece of land

assigned for this expense which some pious ancestor has bequeathed. The priest is present at all important events, such as birth, marriage, and funeral ceremonies, for which he obtains additional fees. Generally a room in the house is assigned for his use, as, being of a higher caste than the family in whose house he lives, he cannot take his food with them.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE GURU, AND INITIATION INTO HINDUISM.

WHEN a Hindu is about eight or nine years of age, the important ceremony of initiation takes place. As in the Christian Church there is the act of Confirmation, by which a person is formally received into the Christian fold, so in Hinduism there is a rite administered by which the child is supposed to enter the sacred pale. This is performed by the guru, a man altogether distinct from the priest. In some sects—and the Hindu community is divided into numerous sects—the guru need not be a Brāhman, but the office may be assumed by any who desire it. At this ceremony, in the case of the Brāhman, Khshetriya, and Vaisya castes, who are regarded as twice-born, the sacred poitra, or thread, is put on for the first time. This simple necklace of thread is the mark of the spiritual aristocracy of India ; and an earl is not more proud of his coronet than is the Hindu of this thread which marks him as a special favourite of the gods.

On the appointed day for the guru's visit, the youth must fast, bathe, and appear in spotless garments. When guru and disciple are alone, the great man selects, out of the thousands that form the Pantheon, one god who must ever after be adored by the disciple as the chief

object of his worship. The teacher then gives the child a text; it may be simply a name of the selected deity, or a few words that have a similar sound. This must be kept as a profound secret, and repeated mentally or in whispers an hundred and eight times daily. Many people use a rosary to assist them in this repetition. This is sometimes carried in a bag; but, Pharisee-like, they do not object to the bag being seen, nor do they hide the movement of their fingers in counting their beads as they stand in the markets and other conspicuous places muttering their charm. In some cases it is supposed to be sufficient if the text is repeated once on rising, and once on retiring to rest. So strong is the superstition regarding secrecy in connection with the mantra, that I have known Christian converts shrink from making it known, lest the anger of the gods should somehow vent itself upon them. As a rule they are meaningless words strung together with a rhyming sound.

The person receiving the mantra is regarded afterwards as the disciple of the man who gives it. This relationship continues through life; and frequently a son inherits his father's disciples as part of his estate. This is a lucrative post, as, influenced by superstitious fears, the people give liberally to men who are believed to wield divine powers. A guru visits his disciples about once a year, and, if he be a really earnest man, avails himself of this opportunity to teach them some portions of Hindu mythology, or other lessons in religion. I have often seen a man with two or three disciples sitting at his feet listening most attentively as he read a few lines from some of their sacred books, and then expounded them for their benefit. As a rule, however, they are ignorant and selfish, their chief object

in visiting their disciples being to obtain the customary fee. The following account of the guru from the pen of a Hindu gentleman * will show the general opinion of these men by the more enlightened of the community :—

"Akin to the priest is the guru. The guru is the medium of salvation, and therefore his position is higher than that of the priest. Woe to the Hindu whose body and soul have not been purified by the spiritual counsels of the guru! He lives and dies a veritable beast on earth, with no hope of immortal bliss. However charitable may be his gifts, however spotless his character, be his faith in the gods ever so strong, his salvation is impossible without the guru. Both the guru and the priest vie with each other in ignorance and conceit. Both are covetous, unprincipled, and up to every vice; but the guru is much more revered than his adversary, owing to his being a less frequent visitor, and the speculative and mysterious nature of his avocations. The guru's sway over the family is complete. His visits are generally annual, unless he be in a fix [for money] on account of an impending matrimonial or funeral ceremony in his house, when he certainly comes to you for his ghostly fee." There are many who simply pass their time in the disciples' houses, going from one to another and remaining as long as they wish, imposing on the hospitality and trading on the superstitious fears of their hosts.

"At one time these visits were regarded as auspicious events. Paterfamilias would consider the morn to have auspiciously dawned which brought with it the radiant face of his guru. . . . Dame Nature has selected him for his precious physiological and anatomical gifts. Picture to yourself a fat, short man having what the

* "The Hindu Family in Bengal," p. 156.

doctors call 'an apoplectic make,' of pretty fair complexion, round face, short nose, long ears, and eyes protruding from their sockets. Picture that face as sleek and soft, shorn of hairy vegetation, and the crown of the head perpetually kept in artificial baldness save a long tuft of hair in the centre. . . . His countenance does not show the least sign of worldly care; plenty and ease have always been his environment. . . . He comes with half a dozen famished beggars, each of whom has an important part to play in his lord's drama. One prepares his food, another his hemp smoking and opium pills, a third looks after his treasure, a fourth shaves him and anoints his body, whilst the sixth helps him in his amatory transactions. These are not paid servants, but mere hirelings, who follow him through fire and through water for anything 'that hath a stomach in it.'

"At the sight of the guru and his crew the whole house is thrown into commotion, and even the inmates of the Zenana for the nonce lose their equanimity. 'The lord has come,' is the alarm given by the karta, and it is echoed and re-echoed in the whole household. Preparations for his entertainment on an extensive scale are immediately ordered; all the while the wily guru laughs in his sleeve with the thought that so long as there are cunning men in the world there must be fools. The karta is seen to reach the doorpost of his house and fall prostrate before the guru, who compliments him by coolly putting his foot on the devotee's head as if it was a stepping-stone to the attainment of higher honours in store for him. It is habitual with the guru to enter the house with a sorry face and cold demeanour. There is a vein of policy in it—viz. to terrify the karta, and extort from him a higher fee. This attempt

sometimes causes unpleasantness. We have seen gurus insulting their spiritual disciples, cursing and swearing, and exhibiting conduct such as would, under any other circumstances, justify his immediate expulsion from the house.

"On entering the house the guru is escorted to a sitting-chamber, furnished with new carpets (for it is sacrilegious to make him sit on used ones), and is requested to be seated. He will not sit at first till the fascination of large promises becomes irresistible, and he yields. Large demands are sometimes made, which are generally acceded to by the terrified disciples. After this the members of the family are inquired after, and are dismissed with the touch of the holy man's foot. After his bath the guru is regaled with the choicest food, and the whole family and their neighbours esteem it a great privilege to partake of what he may leave."

Some of these men are very rich, and make a great show of wealth as they travel in state from village to village. It is rather surprising that, notwithstanding this great display of riches and comfort, they should continue to retain their hold of the Hindu mind; for, as a rule, it is asceticism in their religious teachers rather than enjoyment that seems to have the greatest influence over them. The sacred writings abound with stories of the way in which men, by hard and long-continued penance, have prevailed even over the gods. The disciples are taught that it is safer to offend a god than a guru; because if a man offend a god, his guru can intercede for him; but if he offend his guru he is helpless.

In the Tantras, probably the latest of the religious writings of the Hindus, the powers of the guru are set forth with the greatest extravagance. According to

these books, as the following quotation shows, his power is almost infinite :—"Of this word (guru), the *g* is the cause of friction, the *r* destroys sin, the *u* is Siva himself, the whole word is the Eternal Brāhma excellent and inexplicable. He whose lips pronounce the sound guru, with what sin is he chargeable. The articulation of *g* annihilates the sin even of killing a Brāhman; the sins of the present birth are removed by pronouncing *u*, of ten thousand births by the pronunciation of *ru*. Parasurāma murdered his mother, and Indra destroyed a Brāhman, yet they both obtained absolution by pronouncing the word guru." Though this is the teaching Siva sent his son Ganesa from heaven purposely to convey, the gurus may be and are guilty of the grossest immorality without any great loss of respect amongst the more ignorant classes.

## CHAPTER IV.

### WORSHIP :—HOW SUSTAINED, AND OBJECTS SOUGHT THROUGH IT.

THE people of India, as a rule, are uneducated. Of the population in Bengal, as appears from the last census, 1 in 17 of the adult males were able to read and write ; of the adult females, 1 in 566 only possessed this knowledge. How, then, are they taught religious doctrine and practice?

There is Home Instruction. Knowing that most of the people cannot read, though their ignorance of Hinduism as a whole is noticeable, the accuracy of their knowledge of what belongs to their own particular sect is very remarkable. I have no hesitation in saying that the illiterate Hindu knows better what he ought to do and leave undone, than many know of the simplest truths of Christianity in our own country. In India every one is, more or less, religious; using that word in a broad sense ; and though his morals may be faulty, his observance of caste rules and religious rites is strict. Men who are ignorant of the alphabet would die rather than eat food which had been prepared by men of lower caste, unless it had been sanctified by being offered to an idol; and would kill their daughters in infancy rather than commit the sin of having them unmarried beyond twelve or thirteen years of age. Thousands die of

disease who might recover if they would take proper nourishment, and the medicine that science prescribes, but which they imagine religion forbids.

Whence is all this knowledge obtained? Largely through the teaching in the homes. In India, as elsewhere, the women are excessively superstitious; and, as is frequently the case where people cannot read, the memory is very retentive. Stories heard when a child are repeated with embellishments to their children, and thus a constant religious education of the masses is going on chiefly by the mothers. I have been struck with the correct notions that even young children have, of the peculiar practices of their caste, which are all supposed to be fixed by divine authority. The Hindus are the most religious people I have ever seen. If a question is asked in England, "Why do you do this or that?" the answer would be, "I don't know," or, "Others do it." In India it would be, "Our religion ordains it." Here and there you meet men who do not care for the gods, but these are rare; and even they must respect the rules of their caste, or lose their old companions. In the temples, mothers teach their children to present their offerings, and reverently bow down before the idols; in the rivers they teach them to bathe as a religious duty; in their journeys to the shrines they tell them of the benefits to be derived from such actions; and in the homes they instruct them concerning the names and doings of the many gods that are commonly worshipped. The greatest obstacles to progress in mission work are those that the mothers and wives place in the way.

The Teaching in the Schools. The efforts of the educational department of the Government to induce the schools of the lowest grades to place themselves

under control and inspection, and the fixing of text-books for study, has done a great deal towards removing this method of religious instruction. Before the Governmental system came into operation, and in places where the primary schools are not included in its scheme, the teachers being free to select their own text-books, books are read which have a powerful influence in the education of the people in Hinduism. Parents wish their children to read religious books, and as they contain stories of the deities worshipped, an opportunity is given for the teacher to enlarge upon the benefits that come from their proper adoration. But this method of teaching is passing away, as the books selected by the educational authorities for the examinations are generally free from definite religious instruction.

Next to the teaching of the mothers, perhaps in some respects even more influential, is the teaching given by the guru when he visits his disciples. Though the mantra, or text taught at initiation, is generally unintelligible, the ordinary instruction is not; and the fear of his curse, and faith in his power of intercession with the gods, cause his lessons to be received with marked attention. Many of them are illiterate men; to qualify them for their work, they learn a few sentences in Sanskrit, which they interpret to their disciples, and prepare for another visit by learning more. In travelling through the country one notices that people are familiar with one set of stories about the gods, of which others, near by, are ignorant. The explanation is that they have other gurus who are familiar with other scriptures. In their periodic visits, these men discharge duties similar to those of a minister who supplements his pulpit-teaching by instruction in the home, and have at least as great influence as the confessor in the

confessional. By this means the doctrines of Hinduism are taught, and the religious enthusiasm of the people excited. For there are shrines of which the gurus are advertisers; and it is their duty to recommend a pilgrimage to them. The great reformers of Hinduism have shown their appreciation of the influence these teachers exert by remaining at Benares, Puri, and similar places, to teach their doctrines to those assembled there.

The next important method of instruction is the religious festivals. Each month has a day or days specially sacred to one or other of the deities; and though every Hindu has his own guardian deity, he is bound by fear of the evil of neglect, or by hope of gaining good, to show his respect to the rest. Some of these deities, whose images are enshrined in temples, have special days on which the important events of their lives are brought into prominence by ritual observances; whilst others are kept in mind by temporary images which are worshipped in the homes on days set apart for this purpose. As the Passover preserves amongst the Jews the memory of the deliverance from Egypt, and the feasts of the Church the most important events in the life of our Lord, so these festivals in the temples, and in the houses, are immensely powerful as a means of instruction to the ignorant, and of stimulating the faith and devotion of others.

With this round of special services, with the change of image and the attendant ceremonies, with the descriptive song and mythological representations, it is not surprising that the people know a great deal about their most popular deities. It would be almost impossible to find a Hindu as grossly ignorant of the names and doings of the chief deities of the Pantheon

as some people in England are of Jesus Christ and His apostles. The processions meet the gaze of all, the sound of music and singing reaches every ear, and the natural inquisitiveness of human nature prompts men to ask what it all means. The quiet services in Christian churches are all that could be desired for those who are sufficiently educated to understand and appreciate them ; but for the ignorant the attractive festivals of heathenism, as an instructing agency, are superior. Teaching given through the eye is better understood, and more easily retained in memory, than that which comes through the ear only. One has only to see the people laugh or weep as they witness the ludicrous or pathetic plays which are provided on these occasions, and compare this with the comparative inattention to discourses from the pulpit, to see which method is the more successful. O. W. Holmes says truly, that though men listen to, say, a hundred theological lectures in the course of the year, comparatively few can express the doctrines of the Christian Church in an intelligible manner.

Reading of the Rāmāyana or Mahābhārata and the Purānas. A man in fulfilment of a vow made in time of trouble, or from some other motive, will engage men trained for the purpose to read the Mahābhārata or Rāmāyana to the people. Sometimes the reader sits in the courtyard of a house, sometimes under the shade of a tree, and hundreds of people gather round him for two or three hours in the morning and again in the evening to listen. The sacred books are not lacking in promises of good to those who read or hear them. Almost every chapter closes with the assurance that by that simple act they can obtain freedom from sin. It is a meritorious act for a man to have them read ; it is a meritorious act for the paid reader to read them ;

and it is a meritorious act to listen to them. A more orderly and attentive audience one could scarcely wish to have. The reader often stops to explain the meaning of the more difficult passages; whilst, to give him breathing time, at a given sign the audience breaks forth into a sort of response, generally taking the form of praise to one of the deities. It is interesting to see hundreds of faces intent on hearing the saving words; and as he looks up or raises his hand, to hear from them the cry, "Jai, Jai, Rāma." When it is remembered that these two epics are said to contain the essence of the Vedas, works reserved for Brāhmans only, it is not surprising that low-caste people should gather together to hear what they believe to be the words of God to man. The writers of these Scriptures are very lavish in promises of good to those who read them. Listening to the first book of the Vishnu Purāna "expiates all offences. It gives the fruit of bathing in the Pushkara lake (bathing but once in this lake is said to remove all sin) for twelve years. The gods bestow upon him the dignity of a divine sage, of a patriarch, or of a spirit of heaven."

It is true of the educated classes that the entrance of the light of truth—scientific, historic, and religious—has revealed some of the errors of their religion, but one cannot move amongst the uneducated without being impressed with the fact that it has a firm hold of them. The gifts in the temples are not as valuable as they were, the number of pilgrims visiting the shrines is lessening year by year, Brāhmans are compelled to seek for secular employment, who in former times were supported by the people. But, notwithstanding all this, Hinduism is a mighty power, and has an immense hold upon the people, as a visit to any of the great shrines

will demonstrate. The most absurd stories of their gods are readily believed, so that the miracles of the New Testament are commonplace beside them.

In studying the religious life of the people of India one cannot fail to be struck with the variety of methods by which it is affirmed the greatest good can be attained, and, at the same time, the admitted failure to secure it, when the prescribed duties have been carefully performed. It is stated, in the plainest language, that bathing in the Ganges will cleanse the soul from sin, past, present, and future; nevertheless, those who live on her banks and wash daily in her purifying stream, at the proper season of the year visit some other part of the river, it may be hundreds of miles away, where her waters are said to have still greater purifying power. It is declared in the Mahābhārata and Rāmāyana that the reading, or even hearing, a single chapter of these books will have a like effect upon the human soul. It is affirmed that an offering made at a particular shrine, or bathing in a particular well, will effect the successful accomplishment of any work, and give to the believer the desired deliverance from future births. There are many places where it is promised that the most earnestly desired blessing of salvation can be obtained, many methods by which the soul can get free from the effects of sin, and yet, when these instructions have been followed, the Hindu fails to find what he sought. This hurrying from one means of salvation to another can be accounted for partly by the fear that though an act of merit may have satisfied the claims of one deity, others who have not been pacified may wreak their vengeance upon them. Interested and unscrupulous priests make capital out of the gross ignorance and credulity of the people. At the great

bathing and other festivals, in addition to the special shrine which has drawn the visitors there, are temporary ones, with their image and attendant priests. These men call the attention of the passers-by and promise all kinds of good to the liberal, and threaten evil to the niggardly. Fearing lest the anger of one god may hinder them from obtaining the very blessing they had come to seek from another, the people give. The divine creditors are so numerous that it seems to be more than a life's work to get out of debt. Shrine after shrine is visited and work after work is done ; and yet the fear remains that some deity has been neglected who at any moment may demand his rights, or punish for neglect.

Another noticeable feature of Hindu worship is the way in which each deity is addressed as superior to the rest. Brahmā, Vishnu, Siva, Krishna, Sakti, each, in turn, is regarded as the Supreme, and the others are said to have sprung from, or are manifestations of the one being adored. In like manner, bathing, giving, hearing the Scriptures, penance, pilgrimage, is regarded for the moment as *the* way of salvation. The mind becomes bewildered. There are so many deities, and are so different in character, that almost any habit can be indulged in, almost any vice committed, under the impression that it is pleasing to one or other. Is a man inclined to drink spirits, use bhang, or opium? He can do this as an act pleasing to Siva. Does he wish to eat flesh? This can be done as part of the worship of Kāli. Is he lustful? He has an example in Krishna. Is he fond of travel? He can go on pilgrimage.

An eminent Bengali Christian expresses himself on this subject as follows : " So grossly have the pernicious practices, ceremoniously observed in the country, blunted

the sentiments of piety in her people, and corrupted their notions of the very fundamentals of divine worship, that a Hindu scarcely ever thinks of worshipping his god except by means of unintelligible sounds which he has been taught to articulate without understanding their meaning, and to which he attributes a more than magical efficacy in propitiating the gods. . . . The ritual, of which the largest portion is carefully concealed from the vast majority of the inhabitants, and no portion whereof can be used by the servile classes but in the presence and under the superintendence of the twice-born, has entirely disregarded the duty of rendering a rational and spiritual service to God." *

Some shrines promise special blessings—*e.g.* Jagannātha offers pardon, Benares certain entrance into heaven, etc.—and many visit them in the hope of obtaining these benefits; but what is their aim in their ordinary acts of worship? The following extract from the Vishnu Purāna teaches what may be obtained by worshipping him. "He who pleases Vishnu obtains all terrestrial enjoyments, heaven, final liberation, and, in a word, all his wishes find gratification with whom Vishnu is pleased. How is he to be rendered complaisant? The supreme Vishnu is propitiated by a man who observes the institution of caste, order, and purificatory practices; no other path is the way to please him. He who offers sacrifice, sacrifices to him; he who murmurs prayers, prays to him; he who injures living creatures, injures him; for Hari is all beings. He is propitiated by him who follows the duties prescribed for his caste; who does good to others, never utters abuse, calumny, or untruth; who covets not another's wife or wealth; who never beats or slays any

* *Calcutta Review*, vol. iii. p. 142.

animate or inanimate thing; and who is diligent in the service of the gods, Brāhmans, and religious preceptors."

Many visit the temples on ordinary occasions with the hope of obtaining a definite object. In times of sickness or trouble the superstitious make a vow that, if deliverance is obtained, a goat will be sacrificed to Kāli, a pilgrimage to Puri undertaken, or sacred water will be brought from a holy river and poured on, or in front of, a particular image. The idea of being able to purchase the favour of a deity is generally accepted. Bribery is one of the most common vices of the people. When a trial was pending, it used to be the common practice to bribe all connected with the court, from the judge to the lowest officer; and it was understood that the possessor of the longest purse would win. The magistrates and judges of the superior courts are above suspicion, but it is believed that the officials of the lower courts are sometimes bought in this manner. The same idea seems to prevail respecting their gods—a costly offering being made, or a wearisome journey undertaken, in the belief that it will render a god propitious. That this is the case is further evident from the fulsome language which is addressed to them all in turn. It is an attempt to bribe the deity into compliance with their wishes; the idea of a God of love and goodness, who is ready, without solicitation, to do good is unknown in Hinduism. He is regarded rather as an enemy whose favour must be purchased, a judge whose decisions can be influenced by gifts and service. Of the multitudes who flock to the festivals, it is not love that attracts, but fear that drives them there. "If we do not go," they say, "our crops will fail, our children or husbands will die, our enemies will triumph over us."

If there is no special boon to be asked, there is this general evil to be averted.

Further, it is a common and widespread notion that a man by doing any extraordinary deed, such as the setting up of an image in his house for worship, visiting a shrine, bathing at a specially holy place, making a pilgrimage, incurring bodily suffering, can have these good deeds written to his credit as an equivalent for a certain number of sins. When he leaves the world a balance will be struck, and reward or punishment follow. Hence the religious are ever trying to lay up a stock of merit. Though there are manifold ways prescribed for getting rid of sin, it is explicitly declared in their Sāstras that pardon is impossible. As a man's works so will be his reward. But if there is no pardon, no forgiveness on God's part, there is the payment of an equivalent on theirs. And this is what is meant by their works of merit; it is an attempt, by means of religious acts, over and above what is absolutely necessary, to make a set-off against their sins.

As far as one can learn from observation and conversation with the people, their acts of worship are not intended to aid in securing purity of heart, in conquering an evil nature, and in pleasing God in return for His goodness. Men sin at the shrines as they do in their homes, and on their return as before their visit. Nor is it thought remarkable that this should be so, except in the case of those who have gone to some sacred place to end their days there. In the ordinary pilgrim there does not appear to be any expectation of spiritual or moral benefit. It is a work of supererogation which will be accepted as an equivalent for sins. Sin and punishment are indissolubly joined together; any voluntary suffering is regarded as part of the penalty

due, though in another form. If this self-inflicted punishment were not endured, the natural one would follow by the unalterable decrees of the offended God.

The Hindu Scriptures contain stories to show how men, and demons even, have, by their religious fervour and protracted penance, forced the gods to grant them the boon desired, sometimes to their own hurt, often to the injury of others. These stimulate the faith and perseverance of those in trouble, and lead them to approach the gods in the belief that, by persistent self-sacrifice, they can compel them to do their bidding. The following are typical stories of the power of penance. A demon king of Tripura, by the force of his austerities, extracted a boon from Brahmā, much against his will, that he should be invulnerable save by a son of Siva. As that deity had no son, it seemed likely that the suppliant would remain for ever free from injury; he therefore took by force the treasures of the gods, who in distress repaired to Brahmā for help. As a boon once granted could not be withdrawn, it was arranged that Siva should have a son, and thus the evil was got rid of. In a similar manner, another worshipper of Brahmā, named Hiranyakasipu, obtained a boon that he should not be slain by man or beast, by day or night, in heaven, earth, or hell, presuming on which he made himself obnoxious to Vishnu, who exercised great ingenuity in getting rid of his foe without violating the letter of the promise Brahmā had given. He came as a man-lion, *i.e.* neither man nor beast, slew his enemy at twilight, which was neither day nor night, under the eaves of a house, which is proverbially declared to be neither in heaven, earth, nor hell.

## CHAPTER V.

### WORSHIP IN THE HOME AND IN THE TEMPLES.*

IN this chapter the religious, as distinguished from the social, or secular life of the Hindus, will be described. It is true this distinction is not known to them. All they do is regulated by their sacred books. Hence religion and morality are disconnected. According to popular belief a man commits a greater sin when he violates some caste regulation than when he is guilty of falsehood, dishonesty, or immorality. Still, as the separation of the religious from the ordinary life is familiar to most people, it will be useful here. I wish to describe what, according to our ideas, are technically religious acts—the direct worship that is given to the deities.

As the Christian's aim in worship differs from that of the Hindu, it follows that their methods will also differ. The Christian's aim is to know and love God; that knowing Him he may also know the character it is his duty to strive after, and loving Him, he may have an all-constraining motive to attain it. The Hindu's

* The authorities for the worship of the Hindus, and also for regulating their daily life, are the Vedas, the Epics (*i.e.* the Mahābhārata and the Rāmāyana), the Purānas, and the Tantras. Some of the Tantras are probably older than some of the Purānas, though generally they are regarded as the most modern of the Hindu Scriptures. The Tantriks regard them with reverence equal to that given to the Vedas.

belief is that he is part of God, but through ignorance unable to realize this identity; and his aim is to obtain the knowledge which will ensure his re-union with God. His books teach him that there are two ways of acquiring it. The one is meditation, by which a man ceases to think of anything, and, as far as one can judge from the appearance of those who practise it, becomes almost an idiot. The other is by the performance of works of merit—religious acts, which will ensure the doer of them great reward. The holiest life man can live is that of an ascetic. All hope eventually to rise to that high position. But for those who, in this life, cannot do so, a system of religious works is prescribed by which they may raise themselves in the estimation of the gods, and, after years of happiness in heaven, reappear on earth as Brāhmans, and have the opportunity of qualifying for final absorption into deity. Good works are not the means by which the highest good is directly attained. By their help a step in advance may be made. By this means, too, Brāhmans rise by a gradual process to the most perfect stage.

Brāhmans have assured me that if they perform their religious rites properly, at least two hours in the morning and the same time in the evening would be occupied with them; and an hour or so in the middle of the day should be devoted to similar work. Many spend a long time before and after business hours in this manner. Those living the ascetic life, whose whole time is at their disposal, may not find this very trying; but for men engaged in school or office during the day it must prove irksome. Some of the more wealthy engage a priest to perform some of these ceremonies for them, and hope to obtain the benefit that would come had they personally performed them. As the daily duties

of a Brāhman are numerous, and the instructions minute, it will be possible to mention only the more important.

There are four chief duties or sacraments to be performed daily:—The study of the Vedas, offering of gifts to the departed and to the gods, and the reception of guests. But first, and as a preparation for the due performance of the rest, there is—

*Ablution.* On rising from his couch he must clean his teeth with a twig of the pipul-tree. Then he must proceed to the Ganges, or other holy stream, or a tank, if no river is near, or to a well, and having sipped a little water, sprinkle some before him. He must then throw some eight times over his head, and pour a little on the ground, by which he destroys the demons who war upon the gods. Then thrice plunging into the water, and repeating each time the expiatory prayer which recites the work of creation, he washes his clothes and worships the rising sun. With each act there are appropriate prayers, the object of which is to enable him to perform the rites properly, and to obtain health and prosperity.

To worship the sun properly, reciting the Gāyatri, he ties up the lock of hair which grows long on the top of his head, by which he hopes to be lifted into heaven. He then sips water several times, and touches various parts of his body with his wet hand. If during this exercise he happens to sneeze, he must wait for a moment and touch his right ear as an expiation. For fire, water, the Vedas, the sun, moon, and air reside in the right ear of a Brāhman; and Gangā being there too, and sacrificial fires in his nostrils, when these are touched all sin vanishes in a moment. He then closes his eyes and meditates on Brahmā, Vishnu, Siva, in their respective forms, and whilst holding his breath,

his left nostril being closed with the fingers of his right hand, he repeats the Gāyatri three times. This notable text is as follows: "Om (a word indicating the three great gods of Hinduism—Brahmā, Vishnu, Siva), earth, sky, heaven! We meditate on the adorable light of the resplendent generator (the sun) which governs our intellects, which is water, lustre, savour, immortal faculty of thought, Brahma, earth, sky, heaven." This text is interpreted by the commentators as follows: "That effulgent power which governs our intellects is the primitive element of water, the lustre of gems, and other glittering substances, the savour of trees and herbs, the thinking soul of living beings: it is the creator, preserver, destroyer; the sun and every other deity, and all which moves or which is fixed in the three worlds named earth, sky, and heaven. May he unite my soul to his true radiance." Another interpretation of the Gāyatri differs from the former mainly in the last part, in which it is said, "The power exists internally in my heart, and externally in the sun; being one and the same with that effulgent power, I myself am an irradiated manifestation of the Supreme Brahma." That the sun is the real object of this worship is clear from the following: "That which is in the sun, and called light or effulgent power, is adorable, and must be worshipped by them who dread successive births and deaths, and who eagerly desire beatitude." This prayer is preceded by the names of the seven worlds, signifying that the glorious light permeates them all. 1. Earth, in which we are living. 2. The world, in which beings who have passed from the earth are unconsciously awaiting the end of the present age, when they will again awake to consciousness. 3. Heaven, the abode of the good. 4. The middle world, *i.e.* the region

between these three lower and the next three higher worlds. 5. The world of births, in which animals destroyed at the great conflagration which closes each age are born again. 6. The mansion of the blessed, which is occupied by the sons of Brahmā, who by their austerity are fitted for its blessedness. 7. The sublime abode of truth, the home of Brahma, the Supreme. Entrance into this is attained by true knowledge, the regular discharge of duties, and veracity: once attained it is never lost. The mystic syllable Om must precede and follow this repetition of the names of the seven worlds, or the efficacy of their repetition is lost. Though rites, oblations, sacrifices, pass away, it is declared that this awful word, as it is the symbol of God, cannot pass away.

After the three suppressions of the breath which represent the threefold utterance of the Gāyatri, the worshipper, again sipping water, prays to the sun and the deities who preside over sacrifice to prevent him from imperfectly performing the ceremony; and asks, further, "May whatever sin I have committed by night, in thought, word, or deed, be cancelled by day. Whatever sin is in me, may it be far removed;" then, with other prayers, he offers water to the sun, throws a little eight times over his head, and on the ground. As a means of cleansing his heart from sin, he takes up water in the hollow of his hand, inhales a little with one nostril, and exhales it by the other, and concludes the ceremony by again sipping. He worships the sun again standing on one foot and resting the other on his ankle; looking towards the east, and holding his joined hands open before him, repeats other prayers; again and again the Gāyatri, in a slightly altered form, is repeated, and an offering is made of flowers, grains, water, etc.

A Brāhman living the religious life must also bathe at midday and in the evening. Whilst the forms are similar, the prayers differ slightly; but for a householder who has other duties to attend to, the midday and evening bathing may be dispensed with, and the prayers shortened in the morning. Where bathing in water is inconvenient, rubbing of the body with ashes, standing in the dust raised by cows treading the earth, exposure to the rain, may be substituted for it.

Preparatory to any religious act, or when he bathes with the express object of obtaining freedom from sin, the worshipper must employ rites, and repeat prayers that do not essentially differ from the foregoing. He recites the names of the sacred streams, and concludes with a prayer to earth, after taking up a handful and scattering it, "O Earth, whatever sin has been committed by me, do thou, who art upheld by the hundred-armed Krishna, incarnate as a boar, ascend my limbs and remove every such sin." When seeking deliverance by water, he says, "O consummation of solemn rites who dost purify the most grievous offenders, thou dost invite the basest criminals to purification, thou dost expiate the most heinous crimes, and atone for sins to the gods by oblation and sacrifice; I expiate sins towards mortals by employing mortals to officiate at sacraments; defend me from the pernicious sin of offending the gods." The sun is then to be worshipped with uplifted arms, not as in the morning with joined hands.

There are also instructions given as to the prayers to be offered, and rites to be performed, before the reading of the Vedas commences; offerings of grain have to be made to the gods, inviting them to be present and cheerful as he reads the holy writings; then to the

great progenitors of mankind, to Yama, to his father, grandfather, and great-grandfather, mother, and other near relatives who have died; afterwards for those more remote, and lastly, for all men—the idea being that the gifts of water and grain will relieve the wants of those suffering in hell, or give increase of blessedness to those in heaven. These ceremonies can be shortened or lengthened at the wish of the individual; and when they are finished the Brāhman prepares for his meal. He first gives a portion to the gods, progenitors, relatives who have passed away, and to all other beings, then feeds his guests, and is ready to eat. After washing his hands and feet, and sipping, though not swallowing the water, he sits on a stool or cushion, placed in a clean place and marked off with quadrangular lines. When the food is brought in, he bows to it, raises his hands in the form of a humble salutation to his forehead, and adds, "May this be always ours." After sitting down he should lift the plate with the left hand, and say, "Thou art invigorating." As the food is given to him he says, "May heaven give thee!" and accepts it with the prayer, "May earth receive thee!" Before eating he moves his hand round the plate to insulate it and his person from the rest of the company. He then offers five lumps of it to Yama, sips the water, makes five oblations to breath, wets his eyes, and eats in silence.

At night similar duties are gone through, and offerings of flowers, etc., are made to the gods. If a Vaishnava, the Sālgrāma, the common representation of Vishnu, is worshipped: if of some other sect, an emblem of the special deity. An unceasing round of duties are discharged, though it is difficult to see how they can have any moral or beneficial effect on the character. Some of the Brāhmans are better than

their creed, and better than their ritual could make them.

The Vishnu Purāna gives the following particulars respecting the daily worship of the Brāhmans. In the morning it is his duty to make an oblation of water for the benefit of his ancestors and relations in any former birth who may be in hell. The prayer is as follows: "May the gods, demons, serpents, and trees, birds, fish, all that people the waters, earth, or air, be propitiated by the water I have presented to them. It is given by me for the alleviation of the pains of those who are suffering in hell. May those who are my kindred, and who are not my kindred, and who were my relations in a former life, all who desire libations from me, receive satisfaction from this water. May this water and sesamum relieve the hunger and thirst of all who are suffering from those inflictions wheresoever they may be." After making an offering to the gods in general, he is then to cast a few grains of rice broadcast on a clean place, for the good of creation at large.

Before commencing his meal, he must wait in expectation of a guest's arrival; for "he who feeds himself and neglects the poor and friendless stranger, in want of hospitality, goes to hell." And he must treat his guest well, for if he depart unsatisfied and go elsewhere to obtain more food, he transfers his sins to the man whose house he leaves, and at the same time robs him of the merit he may have laid up in heaven. Brahmā himself is present in every guest, and he it is who partakes of the food that is given. Next he must see that any married woman in his house, any who are ill, aged, and very young, are fed, and then he can partake of his food; but the severest punishment is threatened

if he eat without first bathing, praying, and consecrating his food, and before the children and the aged are supplied.

Whilst the daily duties of the Brāhman are numerous and lengthy, those of the members of other castes are not so by any means. Most Hindus regard it as a duty to bathe daily if this is at all convenient, and to raise their hands and to bow towards the sun as he rises ; but beyond this little or nothing is done. In the houses of the well-to-do the family image is regularly worshipped, the ceremonies being performed by its ministrant priest. As the conch shell is blown or bell rung members of the household may look in, or the poorer neighbours come, whilst flowers, fruits, grain, and water, are offered to the image. The shopkeepers, as a rule, have a picture or an image of Ganesa in their shops, and before commencing business burn a little incense before it; and a devout workman will salute his tools before commencing work for the day. But except in the homes of the Brāhmans, and those of the rich in which are hired priests to attend to these matters for them, there is no daily household worship.

The worshippers of Vishnu, if they can afford to get one, own a Sālgrāma, or at any rate cultivate a small Tulasi plant, the representative of his favourite mistress. Vishnu's spouse, being jealous of her husband's attentions to Tulasi, changed her into a plant; Vishnu, in order that he might still enjoy her company, transformed himself into a Sālgrāma, an ammonite found in some rivers in the Nepal. These Sālgrāmas are carefully kept and treated as though they were living beings. In the hot season they are bathed, and a jar of water is hung over them, from which the water slowly drops and keeps them cool. The Tulasi plant is also well cared for.

Before these the daily prayers are offered, or at least their deity is acknowledged by a profound salutation.

As another part of the private worship of the Hindu should be mentioned the repetition of the names of the gods. It is a meritorious act to repeat these names a great number of times during the day: some of the sects prescribe the use of a rosary to assist in this exercise. Stories are told in their religious books to encourage the practice. In some of these it is affirmed that great sinners have entered heaven because they had frequently uttered the sacred name in teaching it to parrots. It is a common thing for the Hindus to sit at their doors shouting or whispering these names.

When the women bathe, if there is no temple of Siva near, they make an image of the Linga with mud; but as they are not taught the mantras or sacred texts, their worship consists in bowing to the image.

Though the deity differs, and the form of worship varies with the different Hindu sects, yet in the main there is great similarity. In the following account of the ceremonies of the Saktas,* *i.e.* those who exclusively worship the female deities, will be found a fair example of the exercises of the religious members of the community. As there are Brāhmans entirely devoted to religion and Brāhmans engaged in secular work, so there are men of the lower castes who devote far more time to their religious duties than others of their brethren. When circumstances are unfavourable for lengthened acts of devotion it is sufficient for a man simply to repeat his mantra, *i.e.* the text that he received from his guru when he joined the Hindu community. In fact, many content themselves with bowing to the sun as he rises, and with uplifting their hands before partaking of food, and a

* *Calcutta Review*, vol. xxiv. p. 41.

single repetition of the name of the deity. In the daily devotions of the Brāhmans there is the utterance of petitions for pardon, prosperity, long life, etc.; but in the case of those whose worship consists in attending to the Sālgrāma and Tulasi, and other representatives of deity, usually there is no prayer, no expression of the heart's desire to God.

The following list contains the chief acts of worship. *Anchmana.* The object of this is the purification of the worshipper, and consists in taking up water from a copper vessel with the left hand in a copper spoon, and pouring a little on the half-closed palm of the right hand. This is sipped three times, but must not be swallowed. The fingers are dipped into the spoon, and then touch the lips, eyes, ears, and other parts of the head, during which an appropriate mantra is recited. *Sasthi Bachāna.* This is the repetition of the name of the month, the age of the moon, the day of the week, and certain texts, the recital of which is supposed to bring general prosperity. *Sankalpa.* This is the petition-part of the ceremony. The worshipper mentions the object he has in view in this act of devotion: he again repeats the name of the month, the age of the moon, the day of the week, his own name, and that of the great progenitor from whom his family has descended. During the time of this exercise a betel nut, or some other fruit, is held in the water in the copper vessel standing near. *Ghatasthāpana.* This consists in placing an earthen jar, a brass pot, or sometimes simply a lump of mud hollowed out, in which, if it is obtainable, a little water from a sacred river is placed. A bunch of leaves, a green cocoanut, or a ripe plaintain is then put on the top of the vessel, and the distinctive marks of the worshipper's sect are painted in red upon it. Sometimes

an image is worshipped : when this is not done the jar of water is regarded as its representative. *Sāmānya Argha Sthāpana.* This is the offering of prayers to the ten guardians of the earth ; *i.e.* to the beings who are supposed to rule over the eight main points of the compass, the Zenith and the Nadir. This is done by offering an argha, *i.e.* a small quantity of soaked rice, and a few blades of durva grass which are placed in a conch shell to the left of the worshipper. If a Brāhman happen to be present, a few grains of rice must first be given to him, and then the whole is thrown upon the representative of the deity, whether it be an image or the pot of water mentioned above. *Ashan Suddhi, i.e.* the purification of the seat, and really means the determination of the posture of the worshipper during the ceremony. The Tantras declare that there are 80,000 in which the worshipper may sit or stand, the form being determined by the object he has in performing the worship. The most common position is to sit cross-legged upon the ground. *Bhuta Suddhi, i.e.* the purification of the body. The body is said to be composed of five elements—earth, water, fire, air, and ether. In this ceremony fire and ether, which dwell in the forehead, are supposed to work wonders owing to the force of the mantras that are repeated. The fire consumes the old body, and the ether, mixing with the ashes, forms a new one from them. *Prānāyam* and *Rishyādinyās.* These are invitations to the goddess to be present at the celebration of her worship. During the repetition of them, the worshipper must close his nostrils with his fingers, and remain without breathing as long as possible. Some can do this for a great length of time, and it is affirmed that their bodies become so buoyant that they will float in the air. *Matrikānyas Barnanyas.* These consist in

the repetition of the S̀anskrit alphabet, first simply, and then with the strong nasal sounds peculiar to that and cognate languages. Whilst this is being done, the worshipper touches fifty parts of his body. If an image of the goddess forms the object of worship, the corresponding parts of the idol are also touched by the ministrant. *Dhyana; i.e.* meditation. Closing his eyes, the worshipper forms a mental image of the deity; the mantra repeated at this time being a description of her. *Abāhan.* When an earthen pot is taken, as the representative of the deity, a simple invitation is given to make it her temporary dwelling-place; the words used are as follows: "O goddess, come here; stay here; take up thine abode here, and receive my worship." But when an image is employed, two more elaborate rites are performed, viz. the Chakshrudāna, or the giving of eyes, and the Prānpratishtha, or the giving of life. These ceremonies are performed by the officiator touching the eyes, breast, and cheek of the image with the first two fingers of the right hand as he says, "Let the soul of the goddess long continue in happiness in this image." *Puja* or worship. This consists in the offering of rice, fruit, flowers, incense, etc. There are two kinds of puja—the one simple, the other more elaborate. In the simpler form only five articles are required—incense, a burning lamp, sandal-wood powder, flowers, and a cone of soaked rice, adorned with fruits, grain, curds, sweetmeats, etc. In the other there is quite a long performance. A small square plate of gold is regarded as the seat on which the goddess sits, and then the worshipper performs ceremonies which represent the offices of a host to his guest. Water to clean her teeth, and for her bath; food and sweetmeats, such as would be acceptable to a prince, are presented. At this time the

praise of the deity is expressed in the strongest terms of adulation. *Abarana; i.e.* the worship of the ghosts and demons who form the usual attendants of the goddess. *Mahakāla* is the worship of Siva, the husband of the goddess. It will ensure the sufferings of hell, if a man worship Sakti, and neglect at the same time to adore her lord. *Balidāna.* The offering of a sacrifice; it may be a kid, sheep, or buffalo. *Kabajan Path.* The reading or the reciting of the warlike deeds of the goddess. *Homa.* This is a burnt-offering. A bed of sand about a foot square is prepared, on which a little ghi is laid, with a few sacred leaves. This is set on fire, and the forehead of the worshipper is marked with the ashes; what remains over is carefully kept.

The worship in the temple does not greatly differ from that of the home. Before describing this, however, a brief account of the buildings, and the purpose they are designed to serve, will not be out of place. Accustomed to Christian churches, it is not surprising if people imagine that heathen temples are used for a similar purpose. But this is not the case. The churches of Christendom have been built to hold the worshippers, who have come to join together in solemn prayer and praise, to witness processions of the officiants, to hear the solemn strains of music, and to listen to the instructions and exhortations of the preachers. And for such purposes they are well adapted. Further, though there are costly buildings that have been erected through the munificence of private individuals, as a rule they have been raised by the offerings of many people for their common convenience and good. But the temples of the Hindus, having a different purpose to serve, are built in a different style. There are a few large temples, but as a rule they are small. No congregation gathers

in them to witness an imposing ceremonial, or to listen to addresses on religion and morals. The Hindu's object in visiting a temple is not to enter, but simply to walk round the building, hand his offering to the officiating priest, if possible catch a glimpse of the idol it contains, and after prostrating himself before it, return home.

The larger temples consist of an outer court, quadrangular in form, sometimes with verandahs round it, in which pilgrims reside for a day or two when they come to worship, and an edifice at one end containing the shrine. This shrine is divided into two parts—the Sabhā, or vestibule; and the Garbhagriha, in which the image is placed. This inner room is so small as only to admit the officiating priests. There is generally a bell over the door, which is rung on the approach of a worshipper, to call the attention of the god. On festival days, when a constant stream of people is trying to pass in front of the idol as their gifts are laid at its feet, all appearance of devotion and reverence is wanting. In temples, such as that at Kālighat, where bloody sacrifices are offered, the courtyard has the appearance and smell of shambles, for the executioners are busy from dawn till dark decapitating the victims, whose blood floods the pavement.

Many of the temples are the gifts of private individuals, who have erected them to obtain "merit," *i.e.* they are regarded as works of supererogation as a set-off against his sin. If a man decides to spend a certain amount of money, in many cases he will devote it to the erection of a number of small shrines, rather than in raising a grand and imposing structure. The reason for this is a strange one. The building of a temple, whether large or small, procures a certain amount of merit. The money spent on a large one would pay for several small

ones, each of which is productive of the same amount of merit as a more costly one. This fact suggests a reason why new temples spring up, whilst others in their neighbourhood are allowed to fall into ruin. If a man were to spend money in repairing a temple already standing, the "merit" of his deed would be reckoned to the account of the original builder, not to himself.

There are temples large and imposing that are kept in good repair, because well endowed. Some of these endowments are the gifts of previous governments, some of devout worshippers now passed away. Other temples are frequented by pilgrims, whose gifts provide a rich income to their guardians. In some cases men and women are employed to travel from place to place to celebrate the praises of those shrines, and thus increase the number of visitors. In such circumstances it is to the interest of the proprietors to make them as attractive as possible. But whether the temple be large or small, the part the worshippers take is identical—a mere promenade round the shrine, the bestowal of an offering, and a glimpse of the idol for whose worship the building has been raised. So far as I have seen, no instructive work is done in them; nor is there the gathering of a congregation for the presenting of united prayer to the gods.

In Hindu temples the worship proper is all performed by the priests (who must be Brāhmans), though they are regarded as a lower order than others who do not engage in this work. Occasionally some people may be curious enough to watch the ministrant at the altar, but, as a rule, he is not troubled in this way. There is nothing to attract the ordinary Hindu, for the texts are muttered, not distinctly spoken; and if it were possible for them to be heard, being recited in the

Sanskrit language, they would be unintelligible. Moreover, the meaning of the ritualistic acts are known only to the priests. It is their duty to repeat the texts, and present the offerings to the gods; it is the people's duty to provide these gifts, and to pay those who condescend to be their mediators with the gods. The people have nothing more to do.

If the worship performed by the priests be examined, it will be seen that they treat the images as though they were living beings; the attentions paid being similar in form and spirit to those that would be shown by a servant to his master. In the worship of different deities, the texts recited differ, as also do the offerings presented. Vishnu, being careful of life, no bloody sacrifices are made to him; whilst Durgā is regaled with the blood of vast numbers of victims. The daily work in one temple does not largely differ from that in others. As an example of what is commonly done, the worship paid in the temples in which Gopāl is worshipped will be given. This is the name given to Krishna, one of the incarnations of Vishnu, when, as a boy, he lived in the house of Nanda, a cowherd. The word Gopāl signifies the cowherd.

1. *Mangala.* About half an hour after sunrise the image is taken from the couch on which it has been supposed to sleep during the night, is washed and dressed, and placed upon its seat; slight refreshments are offered to it with betel-nut, pān-leaf, and spices—a mixture of which the Hindus are very fond.

2. After an interval of about an hour and a half, *Sringāra* is performed; the image is anointed with oil, camphor, and sandal-wood, and robed in gorgeous garments.

3. Next comes *Givala*, about three-quarters of an

hour after the preceding; it is visited as though it were going out to do the work of a cowherd, which in his younger days was Krishna's occupation.

4. *Rājā Bhoja.* This is the midday meal, when Krishna is supposed to come in from the fields to dine. All kinds of delicacies are placed before the image in the way of food; these are prepared by the officials of the temple, and afterwards distributed to the votaries present, and sometimes sent to the homes of well-to-do people in the neighbourhood, who are friends of the temple and of its priests.

5. *Uthāpan, i.e.* the awaking of the god from his afternoon sleep, which takes place a couple of hours or so before sunset.

6. *Bhoja.* The afternoon meal; this is given about half an hour after he has been awakened from his sleep.

7. *Sandhya.* At sunset the ornaments, etc., are taken off from the image, and it is anointed and perfumed afresh.

8. *Sayan,* repose. About eight or nine o'clock in the evening the image is placed on a bed, refreshments, water, and betel-nut are left near at hand, when the priest retires, and the temple is shut until the following morning.

This goes on, with slight variation in the offerings made and texts recited from day to day, the whole year round. There is no ritual for general use, nor any form of public adoration. At certain festival days—some account of which will be given in another chapter—other rites are performed, having reference to the chief events in the life of Krishna. When the images are heavy, they are not made to lie down at night, but remain in their ordinary position; the ritual observed is, however, practically the same.

## CHAPTER VI.

### FESTIVALS.

IN addition to the ordinary worship of gods whose images are found in a permanent form in the temples and in the homes, there are certain days on which important events in their earthly life are commemorated by festivals, and there are other gods whose worship is almost entirely limited to the days sacred to them. Just as events of the Saviour's life are brought to memory on Christmas Day and Good Friday, so the Hindus commemorate the birth, etc., of Krishna by special festivals; and as we have our saints' days, the Hindus have gods' days, *i.e.* special days for the worship of Lakshmi, Sarasvati, etc. For these festivals an image is prepared, which is destroyed as soon as the worship is over. On these days the houses of the well-to-do Hindus are converted into temples for the time being.

Opposite the entrance-gate of the house is a platform erected to receive these images; whilst the courtyard in front is made for the spectators. Though ordinarily no one would enter uninvited, on these occasions all who come are cordially welcomed. It is an expensive affair to have one of these celebrations, because amusements must be provided and guests entertained. In villages where there are no large family houses, the

people of the district unite in celebrating the *pujas*, each householder paying his share of the expense. In this case a temporary temple is erected.

When it is determined to observe a festival, the first thing is to order the image. These are of various sizes and styles of decoration, according to the price agreed upon. The workman gets bamboos, which are split and tied together in the shape of the desired image. To this framework he binds hay, until there is something of the human form made. Upon this mud from a sacred stream is moulded into shape, and placed in the sun to harden. It is then painted, dressed, and decorated according to designs supplied by the Sāstras.

When the image is taken to the house, at an auspicious moment, the officiating priest invites the deity to reside in it for the time of the festival, and then performs an interesting ceremony called the *prān pratishta*, or giving of life. Prior to this it had no special sacredness attaching to it, and any one might even touch it with impunity; but the repetition of certain words is supposed to change all this, as in the Catholic Church the repetition of the words, "This is my body," is supposed to convert the bread into the body of our Lord. After this it would be profanation for any one except a Hindu to approach, or for any one but a Brāhman to touch it. The priest is occupied for a couple of hours in the morning, and the same time in the evening, repeating texts, offering flowers, fruit, etc., engaging in ceremonies similar to those in a temple. If the festival is in honour of Durgā, a kid or buffalo is sacrificed in front of her image, and a vessel of blood from the victim placed before her.

After the evening worship, immediately in front of the image, amusements of various kinds take place.

Professional singers sing songs in praise of the deity whose worship is being celebrated, or of others; frequently they are of a lascivious kind. Generally there is a Nautch, when professional dancers, sometimes without, sometimes with, immoral gestures, entertain the guests. Sometimes there are Jātras, or theatrical representations of mythological scenes. In these home services, as in the temples, the people have no part in the worship proper; this is done by the officiating priests, with only a few onlookers, who are not supposed to have any connection with this part of the ceremonial.

On the day following, the farewell of the deity is taken. Before her supposed departure, the priest thanks her for the favour she has bestowed in coming, and after asking her to regard with special favour the family whose guest she has been, an invitation is given to return the next year. After this, the image that for a time was regarded as sacred is considered so no longer. Any one may touch it now. At sunset it is carried to the river bank, preceded by a band of music. As darkness comes on torches are lighted. With band playing, women dancing, men shouting, and torches burning, a weird procession is formed. At the water's edge it is placed on a couple of boats lashed together, which are rowed into the middle of the stream, the lashing is cut, the image falls into the water, and the ceremony is complete.

In the course of the year, a considerable number of days are sacred to one or other of the gods, and although a Hindu has his chosen deity whom he specially worships, he is bound to some extent to recognize the rest. A few are content with the worship of one only; but I have known men who, in their private worship, are

devout followers of Vishnu, to whom all life is sacred, officiating as priests at the festivals of Durgā—to whom offerings of blood are made. When this inconsistency is pointed out, they excuse themselves on the ground that they must live, and it is by this means that they gain their livelihood.

The Festivals will now be given in their proper order, as arranged in the almanacks used in Bengal.

1. *Vaisākh.*

This is the first month of the year, according to Bengāli reckoning, answering to parts of April and May. No public religious ceremonies inaugurate the New Year. On this day tradespeople open new accounts, and the year's business is commenced by the painting of an image of Ganesa, the god of wisdom, on their shop doors. The people have great faith in omens, and are anxious to transact as much business as possible on this day, in the belief that the year will then prove prosperous. In order to have a large number of transactions to record, it is common for friends to pretend to purchase goods, so that their names may appear on the books, goods and money being returned a day or two afterwards.

Though there are no great ceremonies, it is considered a specially holy season. It is the hottest month of the year, and, as a work of merit, Hindus place vessels of water near their houses, that cows may quench their thirst, and in the trees for the birds. Water is made to drop over the Linga and Shālgrāma, that these representatives of Siva and Vishnu may be cool and not suffer from thirst. In this month, too, the gods are fed with more dainty food, and the Brāhmans gladdened with more costly gifts. The river Ganges, under the name of Bhāgirathi, is worshipped, and the images of

Vishnu are bathed, but these are unimportant events. There is, however, one festival that calls for notice, viz. the worship of the Dhenki. The Dhenki is a wooden beam working on a pivot, used in husking rice. It is said that Nārada, the patron of this instrument, hearing a guru teaching his disciple to repeat its name, was so pleased with the man's devotion that he paid him a visit riding upon a Dhenki, and translated him to heaven. At several important domestic ceremonies—such as the giving rice to a child for the first time, marriage, the investiture with the sacred thread, this instrument is worshipped; but in the first month of the year the women specially worship it, as it is one of the most useful implements of domestic use. The head of the beam is painted with vermilion, anointed with sacred oil, and presented with rice and the holy grass. Dharmarāja, the lord of virtue or religion, too, is worshipped in some places; as also, in a few localities, is a log of wood called Devāni, *i.e.* partaker of the Divine nature. This wood is said to have the power of visiting the sacred places of pilgrimage by subterranean roads for the benefit of its worshippers.

2. *Jaishtha.*

(1) Dasahāra;* this festival commemorates the descent of the Ganges from heaven, and is called Dasahāra, because bathing at this season is said to remove all the sins committed in ten previous lives. This is an interesting ceremony. Thousands of the people bring their offerings of flowers, fruits, and grain to the river side, and then enter the sacred stream. It is worthy of note that although men and women bathe together, the men wearing only a cloth round their loins,

* For a fuller account of this, see Gangā Sāgar, in the chapter on Pilgrimages.

and the women having the upper part of their bodies exposed, I have never seen any impropriety of gestures on these occasions. In some festivals the grossest impropriety of language and gesture are indulged in; but at bathing festivals I have never noticed any. It is proper for those who live near to bathe in the Ganges; but other rivers may serve as well.

(2) The Snān Jātra. This is the first of the three great festivals in honour of Jagannātha. Though Puri is the headquarters of this worship, it is not confined to that place. Near Serampore, in a village called Mahesh, is a temple which attracts almost as many people as Puri, whilst many villages even observe the feast. The ceremonies are much the same as those at Puri; but, being performed in an open place, they can be seen by all. In many respects it is the most imposing sight in Hindu worship. The image, which has been kept in its shrine for a year, is brought outside, and on a lofty platform, bathed, anointed with oil, and clothed by the priests, in the sight of an immense concourse of people. From 60,000 to 80,000 people direct their gaze as they are engaged in their holy work, and as the time of its completion approaches, scarcely a sound is heard. Many, probably, have gone there out of curiosity, many have gone for amusement; but multitudes have been led there with the desire to *see* Jagannātha, the sight of whom, they believe, will take away their sin. As soon as the bath is over, and the robing complete, the image is raised so that the people can see it; and from the vast crowd there goes a shout, "Jai, Jai, Jagannātha; Jai, Jai, Jagannātha," which once heard can never be forgotten. On these occasions, the neighbourhood has the appearance of a fair, and when the religious ceremony is over, the fun begins. There are stalls having

all kinds of goods on sale, shows, and amusements for young and old. Many fallen women have become Vaishnavas, and are seen in great numbers at this, almost the only religious festival in which they can share. The music, dancing, and general merry-making, seem out of harmony with this impressive ceremony. As there is, annually, an observance of this festival within easy reach of almost every part of Bengal, probably it is more largely attended, and its lessons more widely taught, than those of any other. There are ceremonies, such as the sacrifice of goats in the Durgā Puja, that offend the prejudices of the earnest followers of Vishnu, but in Jagannātha's worship, as it is practised away from Puri, there is nothing to offend the prejudices of any.*

(3) Sasthi, the protectress of women and children, though regularly worshipped at many other times, has her proper festival in this month. At childbirth, and even before, her blessing is invoked on the mother, and until manhood or womanhood is reached, all are under her special care. When children are sick her aid is first invoked to effect their recovery. At her festival it is not common to set up an image; the banian-tree, being specially sacred to her, is her representative. On the day of worship, women march with bands of music to the tree in the middle of the village. Mothers of sons are radiant with joy, whilst those as yet unblessed have disappointment manifest in their looks. The mantras are recited by the priests; the mothers who have sons give presents to those who have none, and the procession wends its way back. After this ceremony is over sons-in-law visit their wives' homes, and after being hospitably entertained, are sent away

* For further account of Puri, see chapter on Pilgrimages.

laden with presents. On the whole, it is one of the happiest days of the year.

"On this festive occasion, the son-in-law is invited to spend the day and night at his father-in-law's house. No pains or expense is spared to entertain him. When he comes in the morning, the first thing he has to do is to go into the female apartments, bow his head in honour of his mother-in-law, and put on the floor a few rupees, say five or ten, sometimes more, if newly married. The food consists of all the delicacies of the season. . . . If this be his first visit as son-in-law, he finds himself bewildered by the abundance of preparation. Many are the tricks employed to outwit him, and in their own way the good-natured females are mistresses of jokes and jests; and nothing pleases them better than to find the youthful new-comer nonplussed. This forms the favourite subject of their talk long after the event. Shut up in a secluded zenāna, quite beyond the influence of the outside world, it is no wonder that their thoughts do not rise above the trifles of their own narrow circle. . . . Ample presents of clothes, fruit, and sweetmeats, are sent to the house of the son-in-law." *

3. *Asārha.*

The festival of this month is the Rath Jātra, or Car Festival. For fifteen days after the Snān Jātra, Jagannātha remains invisible to the public. It is supposed that by the exposure when bathing he caught cold and has been suffering from fever during the days he was hidden. At Puri, this is the time for cleaning and repainting the image, which, with the offerings of his worshippers, has become covered with dirt. On this day the deity is placed on a ponderous car and dragged to the temple of another god, with whom he remains for

* "Hindus as they are," p. 90.

a few days. The ceremonies connected with this festival will be described when speaking of Puri, the ritual observed at the headquarters of his worship being most scrupulously followed in other places. These cars were, and in some places are still, adorned with obscene pictures; but owing to the purer tastes of the people, or the watchful eyes of the magistrates, they are disappearing. A large income is derived from such a popular temple and car as those at Mahesh. A few years ago a rival establishment was started, but the popularity of the old one proved too strong. The old car found willing assistants to drag it to the appointed place, whilst the other remained stationary, and the god had to lose the benefit of a ride and a change of residence.

The Ulta Rath, or the return of Jagannātha to his temple is held about a fortnight after the Car Festival. This is by no means so popular as the former. The image is again placed on the car, and dragged back to its proper temple. The people come in large numbers to share in this festival, but there is nothing like the same enthusiasm manifested as when the deity was on his outward journey. Sometimes the people have to be paid to assist in dragging it home, whilst at the Car Festival there are more volunteers than necessary. Jagannātha, being an incarnation of Vishnu, all the Vaishnavas take part in these ceremonies.

4. *Srāvana.*

The Julana Jātra. This festival is held in temples and houses where there is a shrine of Krishna. In a room adjoining the shrine, the image is placed in a swing, and after swinging for a time is taken back, and then the fun begins. Friends are invited to a feast, and Jātras and other amusements are provided. The Jātra forms an

important part in most Hindu festivals, and are for India what the Miracle Plays were for Europe. In the open courtyard, immediately in front of the image, a space is railed off for the performers. I have never seen them on a raised platform or stage; but as the front rows of people sit on the ground, those standing behind can see the performance. The actors are men and boys, who are in great request at these seasons. The performance takes place immediately in front of the idol, and although it can hardly be regarded as part of the worship, it is supposed to be as much for the delight of the god as for the people who gather to witness it. These plays begin about eleven o'clock at night, and continue until six or seven the following morning. They give representations of the lives of the gods and goddesses of the Pantheon —the amours and amusements of Krishna, the quarrels of Siva and Parvati, the life of Rāma and Sitā, being the most common. The actors are painted and dressed to imitate the deities they represent. Frequently the conversations are rendered attractive by obscene allusions, and in the interludes, boys dressed in women's clothes, dance with indecent gestures. Crowds of men, women, and children watch them the night through, and they form a successful method of teaching the people the memorable events of the lives of the gods. Lessons thus taught are not easily forgotten.

*Manasā.* At this time there is the worship of Manasā,* the queen of snakes, who, though not forgotten at other seasons, has her chief celebration towards the end of this month. Sometimes an image is made, sometimes a pot of water is her representative. It occasions no surprise that in a country infested with snakes, some of which are so venomous that death follows their

* "Hindu Mythology," p. 395.

bite within an hour, some protection from their baneful influence should be sought. And as they are all supposed to be under the Manasā's control, she is worshipped with divine honours. A day or two before the festival mothers prepare a dish of rice and treacle, which is placed before a pot of water under a village tree or in the homes. After being offered to the deity it is eaten by mother and children, whom she hopes to protect from snakes by this simple worship. At Manasā's festival snake-charmers are called into requisition. These men expose themselves to the bite of venomous reptiles, pretending that their mantras, or charms render them proof against poison. It may be that they have been inoculated with it, or that the poison glands of their snakes have been removed. Some of these men are very skilful, and seem to be able to find snakes at any time, and in any place. This festival is held at the commencement of the rainy season. It is then that snakes are driven out of their holes and are unusually destructive of human life.

5. *Bhādra.*

In this month is only one great festival, viz. that of the birth of Krishna. It is called Nandotsaba, the joy of Nanda, the adopted father of the great cowherd. In describing this festival as it is observed at Puri,* we have said all that is necessary. It is observed by all Vaishnavas. Away from Puri there is one form that is not practised there. After the religious rites are over, the excited worshippers dig a hole in the yard before an image of the deity, and pour in water, curds, turmeric, etc.; and, after plunging into this filthy mess, dance and shout the praises of their god. They walk through the streets in this state until they reach another tank

* See chapter on Pilgrimages.

and bathe. In the afternoon processions of singers extol Krishna and Rādhā. Singing and music figure more largely in the worship of Krishna than in that of any other deity. He was a musician himself, and the rejoicing and merriment in his festivals have done much to attract followers from the more quiet and sometimes cruel ceremonies of Siva. At this season of the year the disciples are looked up by their gurus, and receive more liberal donations than at other times.

6. *Aswin.*

In this month fall the festivals connected with Durgā and Lakshmi. The Durgā Puja is emphatically the festival of the year in Bengal.

A Hindu who determines to have the Durgā Puja celebrated in his house, on the day of the Rath Jātra, takes a piece of bamboo into the room where the family idol is kept. The family priest anoints it with sandalwood paste, and invokes Durgā's blessing upon it. It remains there until the birthday of Krishna, when the image maker takes it away to use as part of the material of the image. The figures that cluster around Durgā are her two sons, Kartikeya and Ganesa, Sarasvati, the bride of Brahmā, and Lakshmi, the wife of Vishnu. There is also a representation of Mahesha, the buffalo fiend, whom the goddess came to slay. Round these figures, on what is called a roof, but which is really a half circle, divided into compartments, pictures of other deities are painted, or some mythological scenes represented. These vary according to the tastes of the gentleman in whose house the worship is carried on. The central figure, Durgā, has ten hands, holding various weapons; for, though she bears a mild and gentle expression, it is to represent her when victorious in her conflict with the great asura, the enemy of gods and men.

This festival may be observed or not, according to the will of the householder. Whilst it is a sin of omission to neglect it, its due celebration is supposed to ensure great good to the worshipper. One Sāstra says: "Whoever from ignorance, vanity, or jealousy, or from any other cause, does not worship Durgā, the wrath of the goddess falls on him, and destroys all his wishes." Another declares that "the gratification of Durgā is the assurance of happiness for the whole year, is for the destruction of spirits, goblins, and ghosts, and for the sake of festivity." Another speaks still more strongly, as it declares that "the meritorious effects of gratifying Durgā, even for half a minute, cannot be described by Siva in a hundred years." Where circumstances prevent a man from setting up an image in his house, it is common to worship her at this season represented by a picture or a jar of water, or to send offerings to the shrine at the house of a neighbour or relative. In one of the Purānas it is affirmed that the offerings of slaves and outcasts are acceptable to the goddess at these feasts.

The first act of the ceremony is the Bodhāna, or awaking of the goddess, who is supposed to have been sleeping for the past two months. This consists partly in worshipping a twig of the bēl-tree, which is especially dear to her. When the time to commence the worship arrives, the head of the family declares his name and expresses his purpose to perform the Durgā Puja with proper rites. He next appoints the officiating priests, who, in his name and on his behalf, perform the ceremonies. The priests then go through a long list of rites, and sanctify by mantras the various implements used in the celebration. The most interesting part of the ceremony is that in which the goddess is invited to

visit the house, and dwell in the image that has been prepared for her. The priest, in order to obtain this blessing, after several other ceremonies have been performed, places his right hand on the breast of the image and says, "Om! welcome, Devi, to my house. Accept my worship done according to the Sāstras, O Dispenser of blessings; O Lotus-eyed, I perform this autumnal festival. Respond to me, O great goddess. Annihilator of transgressions in this unfordable ocean of the world. Save me, blessed goddess. I salute thee, beloved. As thou art the only defender, O goddess, the most beloved in the world, enter and stay with this sacrifice as long as I am worshipping thee." After this, the right eye, then the left, then the eye on the forehead, and afterwards the other parts of the body, are touched by the priest, and an appropriate mantra recited. This is the ceremony of Prānpratishtha, or the giving of the life to the image. Next in order is the sanctification of vessels and articles used in the ceremony.

For three mornings and three evenings the worship is continued. In some houses, though not in all, a kid, or more than one, is sacrificed. Sometimes a buffalo is added. The victim is sanctified by Ganges water being sprinkled on its head, and a little vermilion on its forehead. With one blow of the sacrificial knife the head is severed from the body. A little of the blood is placed before the image.

On the afternoon of the fourth day the goddess is supposed to take leave of the image. Elaborate dismissal ceremonies are gone through, and an invitation is given to her to return at the next annual festival. When this is over, the image is taken from the platform, the women of the household and others walk round it,

and throw rice, water, and betel leaves upon it. It is then carried to the riverside, and cast into the stream amidst the shouts of the spectators.

This festival, in Bengal at any rate, is the most popular of all. It is a universal holiday, and husbands and sons, whose business has kept them away, rejoin their families. It is not inaptly termed the Christmas of Bengal, as it is a time of universal rejoicing and merriment. At this festival, as at others already described, when the evening worship is concluded, there is the usual singing, dancing, and theatrical representation throughout the night. And as the amusements are perfectly free, it is not surprising that crowds are attracted. During the three nights of this Puja Calcutta is awake, and although there is much merriment, the police have little to do except to keep the crowds moving as the people go from house to house to witness the amusements.

The other festival of the month is the *Lakshmi Puja,* which takes place on the night of the full moon following the Durgā Puja. This is the wife of Vishnu, the goddess of prosperity. Where an image is not made, her representative is found in every house, viz. a basket for measuring corn. On this occasion the basket, filled with rice, and decorated with flowers, is covered with a piece of cloth. Some people prefer to have an image, and then the worship is performed by priests, as in the case of other deities. As during the night Lakshmi is supposed to bestow blessings on all who may be awake, it is usual for the people to sit up playing cards, or amusing themselves in other ways, so as not to miss her gifts.

7. *Kartik.*

*Shyāmā Puja.* This is the worship of Durgā under

quite another aspect. In her dreadful war with the demons, Durgā, or Kāli, or Tāra, as she is variously called, gained a great victory over Rakta Vija, the commander-in-chief of the enemy's forces, and was so elated by her prowess that she began to dance. Her movements shook the world, and the gods were afraid that it would fall to pieces. In their distress they cried to her husband for help. As he saw no other means of pacifying her, he lay prostrate amongst the slain. Looking down she saw that she was dancing on her husband's body, and became calm with shame, and thrust out her tongue. In images and pictures she is represented black, as her name implies, and her husband is lying under her feet; her tongue protrudes from her mouth, and her four hands are engaged—one grasping a sword, another the head of a giant, and the other two signalling to her hosts. For ear-rings she has demons' heads, her neck is adorned with a necklace of skulls, her only garment, a zone, is made with the hands of her vanquished foes, whilst her hair falls in long tresses to her waist. Intoxicated with blood, her eyes flash with rage. Her worship is in keeping with her character. It takes place at midnight on the night of the new moon, when numbers of animals are sacrificed to her. The darkness of the night, the bleating of the victims, the flashing of the sacrificial knife, the shrieks of the ministering priests as they cry, "Jai, jai, Tāra," the flicker of the torches, the gestures of the intoxicated worshippers, make this one of the most terrible of all the festivals in India.

Two days after the Shyāmā Puja, it is customary for sisters to feed their brothers. In this festival, as they are putting a little paint on their foreheads, they say: "May the path to Yama's kingdom be planted with thorns;" in other words, may you live long. Then

Yama, the ruler of the spirit world, is worshipped. After the religious part of the festival is over, the brothers are well feasted. In the beginning of this month a special service is performed in honour of Yama by the unmarried girls of the family, the object of which is to secure husband and sons, and exemption from punishment in the next world. This ceremony is performed in the following manner :—A small pit having been dug in front of the house, the four corners are sown with wheat or barley, and branches of the plantain-tree are planted at the sides. The young girls put on new clothes, sprinkle Ganges water on their heads, and, going to the pit, present garlands of flowers to Yama.

*Jagaddhātri.* In this month, too, Jagaddhātri (the mother of the world), another of Durgā's many forms, is worshipped. This festival is almost identical with that of Durgā, but with fewer ceremonies, and extending over one day only.

*Kartikeya.* Towards the close of the month, Kartikeya, the god of war, is worshipped. He is the son of Siva and Parvati. His worship is performed on one evening only, and as he is described as living an immoral life, his worship is peculiarly ȧttractive to the immoral women of the cities. Perhaps next to the festivals in honour of Krishna, there is more licentiousness and revelry connected with Kartikeya's festival than with any other.

*Rāsa Jātra.* This festival is held to commemorate the sports of Krishna with the milkmaids of Vrindāvana. It continues for three nights. The image is placed on a lofty platform near the temples, and during the bright moonlight nights crowds gather to participate in the amusements provided. Songs descriptive of the amours of the god, dancing and jātras alternate through the

night, and at early dawn the idol is taken back to its temple, where it remains until the next evening. This is a most popular festival.

8. *Agrahāyana.*

The festival of this month is what may be termed the feast of first-fruits. It is held when the new rice is ripe. An offering of rice, milk, and fruits, is made to the gods, then to the great progenitors of mankind, then to the cattle, then to the scavengers, *i.e.* crows and jackals, and then the people partake of some themselves. When it is remembered that Bengal is pre-eminently an agricultural country, there is something very beautiful in an offering of the first-fruits to the Deity in acknowledgment of the fact that it is He who is the giver of all. Often fireworks and the presentation of gifts to the Brāhmans and spiritual guides close the ceremony.

9. *Poush.*

In the country districts a festival more social than religious is held in this month, called *Poushāli.* During the day men go from house to house with baskets for offerings. The gifts are taken to the village green, where Brāhman cooks prepare the food so that all may freely eat of it. Those who have given towards the feast are welcomed, and in friendly chat a few hours are spent together, after which the feasters return to their homes.

The other festival of this month is the *Feast of Cakes.* This continues for three days, during which Lakshmi and Manasā are worshipped, and in many places Sasthi is also included. Cakes made with rice, treacle, and milk are prepared, which are greatly liked by old and young. On the first day of the feast the furniture is bandaged with straw, in the hope that this will ensure its remaining in the house.

10. *Māgh.*

*Sarasvati Puja.* This is the worship of Brahmā's wife, the goddess of learning. All who have the slightest smattering of education reverence her; and not her image only, but pens, ink, paper, books, etc., by which knowledge can be acquired and taught. The women have no share in this worship; it is strange that the patron of learning should be a woman.

11. *Phalgun.*

In this month the *Dol Jātra* or *Holi* festival, in honour of Krishna, is held. In speaking of the Jagannātha worship at Puri, we shall describe this. It is a festival commonly observed throughout North India, and even where there are no temples of Krishna, the people go about in excited crowds throwing red powder upon passers-by, and singing indecent songs. It is almost impossible for a woman to walk through the streets without being insulted. It commemorates Krishna's voluptuous amusements. In this month Ghentu, the god of itch, is also worshipped, for whom a dunghill is regarded as the representative, or an old broken earthen pot daubed with lime and turmeric. The mistress of the house acts as priestess: when a few doggerel verses about the god have been recited, the vessel is broken into bits. At this time, too, Shitala, the goddess of smallpox, and Olâ Bibi, the goddess of cholera, are also worshipped.

12. *Chaitra.*

In this month the *Charak Puja* takes place. It is said that a king, by reason of his great austerities, obtained an interview with Siva, in commemoration of which this festival is held. The peculiarity of it is that the devotees of Siva belonging to the lower castes, assume the profession and dress of ascetics for a week or ten days, and march about the streets soliciting alms.

On the first day of the festival the amateur Sanyasis throw themselves from a platform, eight or ten feet high, upon knives arranged to fall under the weight of the body. Occasionally they fail to do so, and an accident happens. Processions of these men march to the temple of Kāli, some with spears through their tongues, others with pans of burning incense hanging against their breasts. At this season, too, there is a sort of carnival. Processions are formed, and *tableaux vivants* arranged on platforms, representing different trades and professions, are carried through the streets. In time gone by the gestures of the actors, as well as the scenes represented, were most obscene, but of late years these objectionable features have been largely curtailed. On the second day of the Puja the swinging, which has given its name to this festival, takes place. In former years, a hook, with rope attached, was inserted in the fleshy part of the body of a man. This rope was tied to a bamboo working on a pivot, which raised the victim to a considerable height from the ground. Sometimes the hooks tore away the flesh, and the man fell, with back, or neck, or bones broken. This is now prohibited, but the festival is still held in a modified manner. A bundle of clothes is swung instead of men, or a rope is tied round the body in which the hook is hung. Trevelyan gives the following graphic description of this festival as it occurred in Calcutta, in a letter dated April 17, 1863:

"One morning, at the beginning of this month, as I lay between sleeping and waking near the open window, I began to be aware of a hideous din in an adjacent street. At first the sound of discordant music, and a confused multitude of voices impressed me with the vague idea that a battalion of volunteers were passing

by in marching order headed by their band. This notion was, however, soon dispelled by my bearer, who informed me that this was the festival of Kāli (the bearer was wrong; it was Kāli's husband), the goddess of destruction, and that all the Hindu people had turned out to make holiday. I immediately sallied forth in the direction of the noise, and soon found myself amidst a dense crowd in the principal thoroughfare leading to the shrine of the deity. During a few minutes I could not believe my eyes, for I seemed to have been transported in a moment over more than twenty centuries to the Athens of Cratinus and Aristophanes. If it had not been for the colour of the faces around, I should have believed myself to be on the main road to Eleusis in the full tide of one of the Dionysiac festivals. The spirit of the scene was the same, and at each step some well-known feature reminded one irresistibly that the Bacchic orgies spring from the mysterious fanaticism of the Far East. It was no unfounded tradition that pictured Dionysus returning from conquered India, leopards and tigers chained to his triumphal car, escorted from the Hyphasis to the Asopus by bands of votaries dancing in fantastic measure to the clang of cymbals. It was no chance resemblance this, between a Hindu rite of the middle of the nineteenth century and those wild revels that stream along many a Grecian bas-relief and wind round many an ancient Italian vase; for every detail portrayed in these marvellous works of art was faithfully represented here. If one of the life-like black figures in the Etruscan chamber of the British Museum could have walked down off the background of red pottery into the midst of the road leading to Kāli Ghāt, he would not have attracted the notice of the closest observer. Every half-minute poured by a troop

of worshippers. First came boys stark naked and painted from head to foot in imitation of leopards and tigers, whilst others guided them with reins of thin cord. Then followed three or four strange classic figures, wearing the head-dress which is familiar to us from the existing representations of bacchanalian processions, dancing in an attitude which recalled, spontaneously and instantly, the associations of Smith's 'Dictionary of Antiquities.' The only circumstance which was not in common between 'Tolly's Nullah' and the Cephisus was the censer of live charcoal which these men carried before them, supported by wires passed through the flesh under their armpits. Into this from time to time they threw a powder, which produced a sudden flash, and a most infernal smell. Behind them, his brows crowned profusely with foliage, was led in mimic bonds the chief personage of the company, who was supposed to be under the direct influence of the god. All around him, musicians were beating tomtoms and clashing tambourines, like the satellites of Evius on the day when he leapt from his car into the arms of the forsaken Ariadne; as he still leaps on the glowing canvas of Titian. All was headlong license and drunken frenzy. After struggling through the throng for a mile and a half of dusty streets, I came to a narrow slum which descended to the Ghāt, or landing-place of Kāli, which lies on the nullah [stream] of the mythical hero Tolly [Col. Tolly was a gentleman who owned a large house and grounds on the banks of the stream, a historical person who resided there in the last century, and not a mythical personage], who perhaps was the Atys of this Oriental Cybele. From this lane, a passage of a yard or two in breadth opened on to a dirty court, in which stood the sanctuary whence Calcutta derives its name, which was

an object of awe and reverence to the surrounding population for ages before the first ship, laden with Feringhi wares, was warped up the neighbouring river. It seemed impossible to pierce the mob of devotees, and penetrate to the holy place; but not even religious madness, not even the inspiration of bhang and toddy, could overcome the habitual respect paid to a white face and a pith helmet. A couple of policemen cleared a passage before me to within a few feet of the sacred image. It appeared to be a rude block ornamented with huge glass beads (it is really the head only of the goddess that is visible), but I dare say the Palladium which fell from heaven was not a very elaborate device, and yet it saved the reputation of a young Roman lady, and gave a synonym to an English jury. Before I reached home, what with the jostling and hubbub and stench, I was very glad to get back to the society of clean, fragrant Christians. As I grew every moment more tired and hot the exhibition seemed to savour less of the classical and more of the diabolical. At last I came to the ill-natured conclusion that Satan was at the bottom of the whole business, and not the golden-haired Dionysus."

This completes the list of the chief religious festivals held throughout the year. It is a long list, and coming at short intervals the interest of the people is kept up in religious matters. No special day of the week is sacred to the Hindus, as Friday with the Mussulmāns or Sunday with ourselves; in the shops and fields work goes on steadily from Monday to Monday. The festivals, however, give some relief. On these days little work is done; the religious part of the community derive benefit from the thought of the presence of these divine beings, and in meditation on their works, whilst those caring only for pleasure find what they want in what is provided after the worship proper is over.

# CHAPTER VII.

## PILGRIMAGES.

### BENARES—KĀLI GHĀT—GANGĀ SĀGAR—GAYA —PURI—BHUVANESHWARA.

THE next form of Hindu worship we have to consider, one scarcely less important than the preceding, is visiting shrines, making lengthy journeys to walk round temples, bow before images, and make offerings to the deities represented there. Pilgrimage is the special work of those who have given themselves up to a life of religion. It was one of the virtues of the highest class of Brāhmans, which gave them the privileges of Kulinism. In the ideal life of a Brāhman, his later years should be spent in this work, and is the life-work of millions who are regarded as saints. But this task is not only for those who have adopted the religious life. It is the earnest desire of ordinary people, at least once in a lifetime, to visit one or more of these sacred places. And if one can judge of their faith in this practice by their joy as they come near the goal, their patient endurance of sufferings on the way, and the satisfaction with which they speak of having seen them, it is marvellous. They throw themselves down and kiss the ground as they catch sight of the holy city of Benares; they take the dust from the wheels of Jagannātha's car,

and place it on their head with signs of intense pleasure; they shout with joy as they come in sight of the meeting of the waters of the Ganges with the sea at Saugor Island; and there can be no doubt that, in the minds of many, there is the firm conviction that a visit to these places will ensure them invaluable blessings in this world and the next. A few years ago, as one of these pilgrims was returning from Benares, an accident happened, and he was asked to give evidence against the railway official who caused it; but the man refused to do so, and was apparently disappointed that through the attentions of the surgeon he was restored to health. He would have preferred to die under such circumstances rather than return to his ordinary avocations, and lessen the amount of merit he had obtained by a visit to the holy city. Many by the exercise of the greatest self-denial, extending over lengthened periods, save a little from their scant earnings to provide for the expenses of the journey, and for offerings at the shrines. Poor women, when their husbands are sick, vow to go to one of these places, and though for years they cannot fulfil their vow, as soon as they are able they start. And when it is remembered that it is taught, in what they believe to be an inspired book, that bathing in the sea at Saugor Island will wash away past, present, and future sin, it cannot afford much surprise that they should wish to go.

Formerly the journey to these places was far more difficult and tedious than at present. Railways and steamers carry many visitors with comparative safety and comfort. But all will not avail themselves of these "aids to devotion." They walk as far as possible, and then crowd into unseaworthy boats, so that scarcely a year passes without some of them capsizing in the

creek which separates the scene of the festival at Saugor from the mainland. The road to Puri is strewed by the corpses of those who die on the journey. Others, again, in fulfilment of vows, or in their desire to please the deity by their sufferings, travel for miles by measuring their length upon the ground. They lie down and stretch their hands beyond their heads; and having made a mark with their fingers, place their toes against it, and again stretch themselves upon the ground. In this manner they continue for days together, until they are completely exhausted. When a pilgrim starts for some of these places, it is with the expectation that he will never return. The death of many is accelerated by the extortions of the priests, which leaves them little or nothing for the expenses of the homeward journey.

And what is the life they lead at these places? Benares, though regarded as holy, is one of the most wicked cities in India. At Gangā Sāgar prostitutes ply their infamous traffic. In connection with some temples prostitutes form part of the establishment, and their earnings are taken without scruple by the authorities. The pilgrims bathe, walk round the temples, make offerings at the shrines, suffer many inconveniences from want of proper accommodation; but worship, in the true sense of the word, there is none. Many know little more than the names of the deities whose shrines they visit; nor would the contemplation of their lives make them holier in heart or purer in life. In many cases the more closely a man follows the example of his gods, the more impure will he become.

One means of attracting visitors to the shrines is the employment of touts, who go about the country singing their praises and extolling their virtues. I once had an

opportunity of seeing one in the making that in the course of years may become famous. One of its keepers, a little less astute than the others, let me into the secrets of the place. Some one professed to have seen a spirit hovering over a dirty tank, who declared that its waters had healing virtues. A company of thirty men took advantage of this. A mud temple was erected, and half of the members travelled to make the shrine known, the others remained to receive the visitors. I saw three hundred or more blind, dumb, crippled sufferers who had made their way to this place of healing. So incomplete were the arrangements that a heap of bricks, hidden by a dirty piece of rag, was doing duty for an image. Another place, Tārakeswar, a Siva temple in Bengal, is visited twice a year by 60,000 to 70,000 people. I have heard wonderful stories of the blind receiving sight and the sick being healed by visiting it. When I have ventured to express a doubt of the efficacy of a visit to such places, the narrators stared at me in astonishment. The belief in faith-healing is not confined to the people of England.

It is not, however, as a means of getting relief from sickness that the pilgrims, as a rule, visit shrines. Sometimes it is in fulfilment of vows, made in the hour of trouble; often it is to obtain the greatest of all boons, a son; but in the majority of cases it is to obtain merit. Many of these shrines have stones or lumps of clay hung on trees near by, as reminders to the deity of the desire of the worshipper, which will be redeemed by more valuable gifts when the boon is received.

A brief description of some of the more popular shrines in North India will now be given.

*Benares.*

Of all the shrines, Benares is the most sacred. It is the city of Siva, the great god of the Hindus. Being a place peculiarly dear to him, it is the earnest wish of his worshippers to die within its sacred precincts; but if that be impracticable, at least to visit it. Hindus, if they can afford to do so, move there to end their days, in the assurance that by this means they will gain easy entrance into heaven. The legend * by which the excessive sanctity of Benares is taught is as follows. On one occasion Brahmā and Siva quarrelled respecting their respective positions. As Brahmā declared that he was supreme, Siva cut off his opponent's fifth head, and was guilty of the heinous crime of injuring Brahmā, the progenitor of the Brāhmans. He found himself in a miserable plight; the dissevered head adhered to his hand, as the blood of his slaughtered guest to the hand of Macbeth. In order to get free from this dreadful load, Siva wandered from shrine to shrine, and practised the most arduous penances. But it was not until he reached Benares that deliverance came. Following his example, his worshippers, weighed down with the burden of sin, go to the same place to find peace of conscience and the assurance of salvation.

This shrine is not bounded by the city proper, but extends from the Ganges to a road called the Panch-Kosi road, *i.e.* a road that, at any spot, is not more than ten miles distant from the river. Leaving the stream at the south of the city, it winds through the country until it rejoins it on the north. Along its course of about fifty miles are temples of the deities, who act as a police force in keeping the peace of the city. It is a

* "Hindu Mythology," p. 228.

meritorious act for the pilgrim to traverse this path. Even the regular inhabitants ought to do so at least once a year. The conditions of benefiting by the journey are somewhat stringent. Those who attempt it must bathe before starting, and at the close of each day's journey; must walk barefooted, only children and sick people are allowed to be carried. They must not give food or water to their friends, nor take these things from others; each must make provision for his own wants. They must not indulge in bad language or quarrel on the way or the merit is lost. There are six regular stages where they stay *en route*. On reaching the Mankarnika Ghāt, where they started, they must bathe, fee the attendant priests, and then visit a temple of Ganesa, known as Sakhi Bināyak, where their act of penance is recorded. This weary walk is usually the final act of a successful pilgrimage. It is estimated that at least two-thirds of the people crowding the streets of this interesting city are pilgrims who have come to obtain the spiritual benefits it offers.

There is no doubt that Benares is one of the most ancient cities of India; but when it was founded cannot now be determined. "By some subtle, mysterious charm this city has linked itself with the religious sympathies of the Hindus through every century of its existence. For the sanctity of its inhabitants, of its temples and tombs, of its wells and streams, of the very soil that is trodden, of the air that is breathed, and of everything in and around it, Benares has been famed for thousands of years. The poor deluded sensualist, whose life has been passed in abominable practices, or the covetous usurer who has made himself rich by a long course of hard-fisted extortion, or the fanatical devotee, fool, and murderer, more simple than a babe,

yet guilty of the foulest crimes, still comes, as of old, from the remotest corners of India as the sands of time are slowly ebbing away; and fearful lest the golden thread should be snapped before his long journey is ended, he makes desperate efforts to hold on his course, until, arriving at the sacred city and touching its hallowed soil, his anxious spirit becomes suddenly calm, a strange sense of relief comes over him, and he is at once cheered and comforted with the treacherous lie, that his sins are forgiven him and his soul is saved."

The common belief of its origin is that seven great Rishis asked Vishnu to show them the way of salvation. The deity, in response to this prayer, made a linga which shone with great brightness. At first it was only a span wide, but gradually expanded until it extended to ten miles. All around there was nothing but a waste of waters. Vishnu then created the world, the linga forming the centre.

The form of religion in Benares is Purānic, which probably began to exert its influence over the people as Buddhism lost its authority. There is no doubt that Vedantism more or less colours the philosophical creed of the thoughtful and better educated, but the worship of the masses is pure and simple idolatry in its lowest and grossest forms—the worship of ugly idols, monsters, the linga and other indecent figures. There is no city in India where the reverence paid to idols is more absolute and complete; and though better things might be expected of the pundits and thinking men, they join in this with the ignorant and superstitious. There have been more temples built and more money spent in idolatrous worship since the country came under British rule than during the same number of years when the Mussulmāns were masters. Owing

to their cruel oppression the people were poor; now, as life and property are secure, under the belief that it will add to their bliss in heaven, many have built temples in the holy city, or lavished gifts upon the priests who minister in those already existing. There is, however, no solidarity in Hinduism. A temple of costly material and beautiful workmanship is allowed to go to ruin whilst a new one is being erected by its side. No one will give money to restore the structure another has raised. The erection of the one falling down has done its work in obtaining merit for its builder, and instead of repairing it, a man will construct another for which the merit may be his own. There is no difficulty in obtaining them ready made. Temples, each piece carved and numbered for reconstruction, are on sale.

Some years ago the temples of Benares were officially counted, and it was found that there were a thousand within the city proper. This number has since increased. Although most of them are of comparatively modern date, many shrines remain, where for centuries there has been a constant stream of worshippers. The pundits in Benares say that Ganesa is worshipped in 56 places, Yogani in 64, Durgā in 9, Bhairava in 8, Siva in 11, Vishnu in 1, the Sun in 12, which date from the mythical period when Devodās, the Rāja of Benares, was prevailed upon to allow the gods to return to their ancient home from which he had expelled them. As the people believe that these deities, though differing in character and appearance, are varied representatives of the One, they accumulate many idols in a building. There will be the chief image in the place of honour, and others in niches in the walls; sometimes they are arranged in rows on the ground within the temple enclosure. And in some cases these subordinate deities receive equal, if

not greater attention than the one for whose worship the building was originally erected.

The most important temple in the whole city, and that to which the pilgrims hasten on their arrival, is that of Visheshwar, the God of the world, a name of Siva. He is regarded as king of the gods in Benares itself, and in the sacred territory enclosed by the Panchkosi road. His Kōtwal or magistrate is Bhaironāth, and the other gods whose shrines adorn the sacred path are his watchmen. Visheshwar is represented by the linga, such as is usually seen in temples of Siva. All day long crowds pass in front of it with offerings of sugar, rice, ghi, grain, flowers, money, etc. Over the narrow gateway leading to the shrine is an image of Ganesa, on which the pilgrims sprinkle a few drops of water they have brought from the river. As each visitor approaches a bell is rung to announce his arrival. They draw near with fear and trembling; nor can any one be surprised at this, when they remember the stories told about this dreadful deity. The superstitious pilgrim is terrified lest he should ignorantly give offence to one who is both powerful and easily angered. As soon as the image is passed and the temple precincts left behind, they can breathe freely. Outside of the enclosure on the north side, in what is called the "Court of Mahādeva," are a number of the emblems of Siva and his consort: possibly they were left when some of the old temples were destroyed by the Mussulmāns.

Near this temple is the Gyan Kup or well of knowledge. Tradition says that on one occasion, as no rain fell for twelve years, a Rishi pierced the earth with Siva's trident, when a copious stream of water sprang up. Siva, delighted with this act of faith in his power,

promised to reside in the well for ever. The worshippers throw in water, flowers, and other things as presents to him, the result is that the stench is one peculiar to the sacred city, and not soon forgotten. Of late the authorities have attempted to lessen the evil by partially covering it over. A draught of its water is said to secure the salvation of the recipient.

Next in importance to the temple of Bisheshwar is that of Annapurnā, a form of Durgā. Under orders from her husband she feeds the inhabitants of the city. When Benares was first inhabited, Annapurnā found her work difficult. Gangā came to her relief, and promised that if she would give food, she would supply water. In honour of this goddess poor people are fed, a handful of grain being given to as many as the donor can afford. Near by there is an ample supply of beggars waiting to receive the gifts.

Near the temple of Annapurnā is the temple of Sakhibināik; the deity who keeps a record of the pilgrims' names who enter the city and march along the road which encircles it. This is generally visited as they are about to return home.

About a mile from the temple of Bisheshwar is that of Bhaironāth, the magistrate of Benares. It is his duty to keep the peace of the city, and to prevent the entrance of evil spirits. It is through his help that those who go to Benares to end their days, obtain salvation. His image is made of stone, with a silver face, and represents him with his cudgel in hand. His vāhan or vehicle was a dog, a representative of which is placed near the image.

The Mankarnika well is one of the greatest attractions of Benares, and is amongst the first places visited by pilgrims. Its filthy water is regarded as efficacious in

washing away sin and purifying the human soul. The greatest crimes are to be got rid of by simply bathing in its foul water. The story which leads to this belief is as follows. The well was dug by Vishnu, who filled it with perspiration from his own body. As he was engaged in religious rites, Siva happened to pass by, when he saw his own face reflected in the water, with the glory of a hundred million suns. He was so delighted that he promised Vishnu any boon he might ask. Vishnu asked that Siva would always remain with him. On hearing this request Mahādeva shook with pleasure, so that an ear-ring fell into the well. For this reason Siva gave the well the name of Mankarnika, and endowed it with two properties—the power of giving salvation to his worshippers, and of granting success in every good work. A flight of steps leads down to the water, on one side of which is an image of Vishnu. Offerings to ancestors are also made here. The water, only two or three feet deep, is abominably filthy, yet the people bathe in it in the hope of gaining the blessings promised.

Amongst the other temples is one to Vridhakāli, the lengthener of time, who, pleased with the devotion of an old man who went to Benares to die, restored him to health, and renewed his youth. In gratitude for this one of the grandest old temples of the city was built, in which is a representation of the sun and the planets.

The temples are so numerous, and the deities represented so various, that there is scarcely a blessing for this life or the next, that is not promised to the pilgrims at Benares. It is, therefore, no matter of surprise that they crowd its sacred streets.

### *Kāli Ghāt.*

Kāli Ghāt is the name of a temple near the capital of India, an anglicised form of which is in the word Calcutta. The temple is said to have a supernatural origin. When, owing to a slight shown her husband, Parvati destroyed herself, Siva was inconsolable, and throwing her corpse over his shoulder, wandered about, causing consternation and trouble. To put an end to this, Vishnu let his wonder-working discus fly, and the body of the goddess was cut into fifty parts. Wherever a part fell, a temple rose. The authorities at Kāli Ghāt affirm that the second toe of her left foot is preserved there. Excepting Krishna's bones at Puri, and the various parts of Parvati in some of her temples, there is no regard for relics shown by the Hindus.

Pilgrims visit Kāli Ghāt every day, but at the festival days of Siva, and of Durgā in any of her forms, immense crowds gather there. The great purpose in visiting Kāli's temple is to sacrifice a kid or buffalo. People desirous of sons, or those in sorrow vow that if a son be given, or the trouble be removed, a kid will be sacrificed to her; in many cases it is to fulfil these vows that they come. There is no promise of relief from sin, or of entrance into heaven; it is as the giver of good in this life, and as the deliverer from present evil, that Kāli's temple is sought.

The image is hideous. She is black, as her name implies, and came apparently as an assistant, or as the people affirm, another incarnation of Durgā, to destroy the demons who were afflicting mankind. When her work was done, she danced so violently that the earth trembled. To put a stop to this, her husband lay down amongst the corpses. Seeing him under her feet she

thrust out her tongue as an expression of her shame, and is usually represented in this posture. At Kāli Ghāt her golden tongue is almost all that is visible, as the place is dark, and the image hidden by flowers that the worshippers have presented.

The temple is a source of considerable profit to the proprietors, as in addition to offerings to the goddess, a fee of sixpence is taken for every kid that is sacrificed there. On some days the victims are numbered by thousands. The family who enjoy this income is divided into a number of branches, each of which receives the offerings for a week or ten days; in addition to this the receipts at the festivals are shared amongst them.

The temple or shrine is not large. In front of it is a covered platform on which Brāhmans sit to read the Sāstras, and spectators to witness the sacrifices. The courtyard around the place of sacrifice is repulsive to the eye, whilst the smell is sickening. Amongst the excited crowd there is no sign of reverence as they offer victims to the deity; each one struggles to the front to get attended to. They bring the victim, pay the fee, the priest puts a little vermilion on its head, and the executioner fixes its head in a frame, and beheads it. A little blood is placed in front of the idol, and the pilgrim takes away the headless body for a feast. Throughout the ceremony, there seems nothing expressive of sorrow for sin or desire for purity; nothing to awaken or sustain devotion to God, or to induce to effort after a pure and holy life. The whole proceedings seem unfitted, as far as one can see, to benefit the worshippers in any way.

*Gangā Sāgar.*

This is a great bathing festival. Though it is considered a good thing to bathe at any time, in any part of the Ganges, there are special seasons and special places where there is greater virtue in the act. The mouth of the river is peculiarly holy. To bathe there the people go to Saugor Island, where sea and river meet, as the name of the festival Gangā Sāgar indicates. In January great crowds are attracted there year by year by the promise of salvation from sin.

The promise to those who bathe at this season is very explicit; it is that all sin—past, present, and future—will be removed. As in the early days of the Christian Church converts delayed their baptism until late in life lest after receiving it they should fall into mortal sin; so, in many cases it is the aged that attend the festival at Gangā Sāgar, as a preparation for death, that cannot be very far off. The story from the Rāmāyana which has made Saugor Island so popular is as follows:—A king named Sāgar being childless, repeatedly prayed for a son. At last Siva, pleased with his devotion, gave him 60,000. Some time after this the king wished to become Indra, or king over the gods. This position could only be obtained by the performance of an Asvamedha, or sacrifice of a hundred horses. The ceremony proceeded satisfactorily until ninety-nine had been offered. On the eve of the last day, the intended victim was loosed to wander at will during the night; but the following morning could not be found. The reigning Indra had stolen it lest he should have to resign his throne to Sāgar. The sons of the king searched everywhere, but their efforts were for a long time fruitless. At last they came to the middle of the

earth, where they found the animal under a tree beside a saint named Kapila, an incarnation of Vishnu. Imagining him to be guilty of the theft, they abused him; and he, becoming angry at the false charge, cursed them, and they were reduced to ashes. One son only who had remained with his father was spared. The king, in his sorrow, is told that his sons could be restored by Gangā coming from her heavenly abode in the Himālayah mountains. Sāgar seeing no way of effecting this, resigned his kingdom, and went to heaven. His great-grandson, Bhagiratha, was more successful. He obtained as a boon from the gods the assurance that she should come. When she came, no sooner did she touch the ashes than the princes sprang to life, and were carried in golden chariots to Indra's heaven. As it was at this place she manifested her great power, the people come there to bathe in the hope that they, too, may by her influence obtain admission to heaven.

At these festivals as many as 150,000 are present. During part of the year the place where they are held is under water, as the waters of the Bay of Bengal are piled up by the south-west winds. On reaching the sacred ground the people make temporary dwelling-places on shore, as the boats which brought them are generally over-crowded.

The great object in coming there is to bathe, and it is interesting to see thousands of people plunging in the sea in the hope of washing away their sins. For this they have been saving money for years. For this some have been travelling for weeks, exposed to danger and discomfort. This hope has cheered them often in seasons of sickness and sorrow. As soon as it is light crowds rush into the water with shouts of exultation;

they are at last able to gratify the desire of years, and doing what they regard as the most holy act of religion.

Another important work for the pilgrim is the worship of the many deities that are there represented. Along the sides of the main thoroughfares are images raised on heaps of sand, whose priestly owners shout their praises and sit with open hands, to receive the gifts of the pious. The pilgrims go up one side and down the other, giving a little to the guardians of every idol, anxious not to omit any lest the neglected one in his anger should bring evil upon them. The extortion of these priests adds greatly to the expense of a visit to a shrine. They call attention to the deity in whom they are personally interested, and threaten with his curse those who refuse to contribute. In addition to the deities are hundreds of saints, whom it is a work of merit to feed; and the people, anxious to do everything that can ensure their future well-being, lavish their hard-earned money on those who are able, though not willing, to work for their living.

At this festival the most important object of worship is an image of Kapila, the saint who burnt up the sons of the king Sāgar. This is a shapeless block of stone daubed with red paint. During the greater part of the year it is kept in Calcutta; but a week or two before the festival it is handed over to a number of priests, who take charge of it during the festival, and receive a share of the pilgrims' gifts. It is placed in a temporary temple, as the old one has been washed away by the encroaching sea, on a platform of sand about four feet high. A bamboo railing in front keeps off the crowds, who from daylight till dark are hurrying past it. Every one gives something. When asked why they do so, the

answer is: "If Kapila Muni could destroy Sāgar's sons, how mighty he must be! And if we please him with our gifts he will pray to the gods for us, and through his intercession we shall be blessed." Of course where the belief prevails that he was an incarnation of Vishnu, it is easy to see why offerings should be made to him. I have watched people as they hurried past this block of stone giving all they had, and felt that they were amongst the most religious I had ever seen. Their belief in the power of the gods to curse and bless is unlimited; and, after bathing in the sea and washing away their guilt, they come with glad hearts to make a thank-offering for the boon received.

Stories such as the following from the Rāmāyana excite and sustain the faith of the people in this method of purification from sin, and lead them to make pilgrimages to the banks of the sacred stream. A pre-eminently wicked Brāhman, who from youth had been associated with a harlot, was walking in a wood when a tiger seized him, ate his flesh, and drank his blood. A crow was flying over the Ganges with one of his bones in its mouth when a vulture attacked him, and the bone fell into the water. Immediately it touched the stream the emissaries of Vishnu took possession of the soul of the dead man, as it was being carried off to Yama. The emissaries of the ruler of the lower regions told their master what had happened, whereupon he rushed off to Vishnu with the story of his wrongs. Vishnu declared that Gangā had gone to earth for the express purpose of taking away the sin of man; that her power was such that even he, the Lord of all, could not estimate it; that as far as her waves rolled he would extend his protecting arm, so that as soon as a bone touched the water, the soul of the man should ascend to heaven;

and that a draught of water from this river would atone for the sins of a lifetime.

The following invocation to Gangā is found in a child's reading book, and has doubtless influenced many in their religious practices :

"Oh ancient Purifier of the fallen, the drinking-vessel of Brahmā was thine abode. At his side didst thou dwell, and sanctify the city of the gods. Seeing the sad state of mortals, to deliver them from fear of the future, thou, goddess of the gods, camest upon earth. . . . The most wicked sinner upon touching thy waters goes to heaven in his body. . . . The low Sudra or Sanyasi on dying goes to heaven if he has bathed there when the sun enters Capricorn. By pronouncing thy name he obtains admittance to the house of Vishnu ; he is spared the sight of Yama's city. When life has fled from the corpse, the father and mother will drag it to the place of cremation, and whilst they forsake it, thou foldest it in thy bosom. The corpse fed upon by crows and jackals floats till it reaches thy banks, where hundreds of heavenly courtezans with fans in their hands come to attend upon it. . . . The most wicked sinner if he but touch thy waters enjoys thy favour in the last extremity."

*Carrying Water from the Ganges.*

Another common form of pilgrimage to the Ganges—if possible to Hurdwar where its waters rush forth from the hills, or, if that be too far distant, then to some nearer spot—is to fetch a vessel of water to bathe the image of a deity whose aid has been sought in time of sickness or trouble, and to whom this offering of sacred water was promised if a favourable issue resulted. During the cold season it is a common thing to see peop'e travelling with a vessel of this water. In some cases a

vow is made that the person interested will himself undertake this task, which may necessitate a journey of a thousand miles, or a servant may be sent on this errand, or it may be purchased from men who earn their living by carrying it to places remote from the river. The water from Hurdwar is put into bottles which bear the seal of the officiating priests of the temple there. When this costly water is poured over or in front of an image of Vishnu, or any of his incarnations, it is drunk by his worshippers, as it is supposed to have healing and purifying virtues; but, owing to a curse pronounced by his wife, that which is poured over Siva's image is not allowed to touch human lips. In this form of worship the idea of David when Araunah wished to give him cattle for a sacrifice is seen. He said, "Nay, but I will surely buy them from thee at a price. Shall I give to Jehovah that which costs me nothing." It is when some loved member of a family has recovered from sickness, or a law-suit has been favourably decided, that this expensive expression of gratitude is employed.

### *Gayā.*

This well-known place of pilgrimage is resorted to for the benefit of the dead rather than the living; for funeral ceremonies are considered to be of far greater benefit if performed here than elsewhere. Originally Gayā was the headquarters of the Buddhists. It was there that Buddha lived during his hermit-life and attained to the highest state of purity. Here for centuries Buddhists flocked from all parts of India and the farther East, though now as a Buddhist shrine it is almost deserted. In fact, the shrine that the Buddhists regarded as the most sacred spot on earth is under the charge of a Saiva Mahant and disciples, who receive the

gifts of the people that visit the sacred tree near at hand. His income from lands and offerings is reckoned at eighty thousand rupees per year, out of which he has to feed about a hundred pilgrims and ascetics daily. The town is called Buddha Gayā, to distinguish it from Brahmā Gayā, or simply Gayā, five miles distant, to which the Hindus resort. The town has existed for 2400 years. Buddha not only made there his great discovery of the way of salvation, but also began his work of publishing it. The people of that district were the first to believe in him and receive his doctrines, and it became for a time the headquarters of his faith. But at the beginning of the fifth century it had lost its Buddhist character and relapsed into Hinduism. In the Vāyu Purāna is a legend to account for this change, and for the sacred character it possesses in the minds of the Hindus of the present day.

Brahmā created all things by the order of Vishnu, who from his fierce nature produced the asuras, and from his humane nature the noble-minded devas. Among the asuras was one Gayā, who was endowed with immense strength and vigour. This great giant measured 576 miles in height, 268 miles in girth, and was a devout worshipper of Vishnu. With his breath suppressed he practised great austerities for thousands of years until the gods became afraid, and repaired to Brahmā for aid. Brahmā led them to Siva, and he in his turn conducted them to Vishnu, saying, "He will devise some means of relief." Arriving in his presence they adored him in a hymn, whereupon he told them to proceed to the asura Gayā, and that he also would accompany them.

The three deities asked Gayā why he persevered in his austerities and assured him that they were prepared to

grant any boon he might ask. The request was this: "Make my body purer than that of Brahmā, Vishnu, Siva; purer than the devas or Brāhmans, purer than sacrifices, sacred pools, and high mountains, purer even than the purest of gods." "Be it so," said the gods, and repaired to heaven. The result was that mortals who believed in or touched the demon ascended to the heaven of Brahmā, the world became empty, and Hades, Yama's dominion, was deprived of inhabitants.

When Yama, Indra, and the other deities were thus deprived of their subjects, they repaired to Brahmā to resign their positions, as there was nothing for them to do. Led by Brahmā, they again repaired to Vishnu, and complained that "by the sight of the demon whom you have blessed all mortals are being translated to heaven, and the three regions (earth, sky, and hell) have become empty." Under the advice of Vishnu, the gods again repaired to Gayā, to ask him to give his body that they might offer a sacrifice upon it, by which means he assured them they would escape from their present difficulties. The demon was delighted at the honour which was paid to him, and, addressing Brahmā and the gods, said: "Blessed is my life this day, blessed is my penance; verily I have attained all my objects since Brahmā has become my guest. Say why you have come, and I will at once execute the task for you." Brahmā then told him that of all the holy pools, there was none to compare with his body as a place of sacrifice, and asked him to grant it for this purpose. Gayā replied: "Blessed am I that you have asked for my body; my paternal ancestors will be sanctified shouldest thou perform a sacrifice on it. By you it was created; it is well that it should be of use to you, it will then be of use to all."

Having thus spoken, the demon fell prostrate on the ground, leaning towards the south-west. Brahmā produced from his mind the officiating priests, collected the necessary articles, and offered the sacrifice. The priests having been fed and the bathing ceremonies over, he and his companions were surprised to find that the demon's body was moving along the ground. He therefore ran to Yama, and asked him to bring the stone of religion and place it upon the demon's head; but though this was done, Gayā still moved. The gods then sat upon the stone to press it down; but their efforts were useless. In his distress Brahmā repaired to Vishnu, and told him of the failure of the gods. Vishnu sent a fierce fiend; even he was powerless too. At last Vishnu came himself, and striking the demon with his mace, and sitting with the other gods and goddesses upon the stone, was able to keep it quiet. Upon this Gayā said, "Why should you treat me thus, when I have given my sinless body to Brahmā? Would I not have become motionless if Vishnu had asked me? Why should he torture me with his mace? And why should you all join in this torture? Show mercy to me?" The gods promised to grant his request. Gayā prayed: "As long as the earth and mountains, seas and stars shall last, may you, Brahmā, Vishnu, and Mahādeva, rest on this stone. May you, the devas, rest on it too, and call this place after me, The Field of Gayā, extending over ten miles, of which two miles are covered with my head. Therein, for the good of mankind, let all the sacred tanks on earth abide, where persons by bathing and offering of oblations of water, or funeral cakes, may attain high merit for themselves, and translate their ancestors blessed with all that is desirable, and salvation, to the region of Brahmā. As long as Vishnu in his

triple form shall be adored by the learned, so long let this be renowned on earth as the sacred place of Gayāsura, and may resort to it cleanse men of even the sin of killing Brāhmans." Hearing this, the gods, led by Vishnu, said: "Whatever you ask shall be accomplished. By offering the funeral cakes, and performing Shrādhas here, persons will translate their ancestors for a hundred generations, as also themselves, to heaven, where exists no disease. By worshipping our feet they will attain to the highest reward in after life."

It is the influence of this legend which leads the people to visit Gayā to perform the Shrādha of their deceased relatives. And monstrous as the story at first sight seems, Dr. Mittra, in his account of Gayā, suggests a plausible, and at the same time reasonable, explanation of it. The asuras (literally non-gods) are generally described as the enemies of the gods; but Gayā was a devout worshipper of Vishnu, and thus gained immense power. Gayā then represented Buddhism, which at one time threatened the extinction of Hinduism, and by its simple rites and the abolition of sacrifice, did away with the necessity of the priests, and cut off their resources. He was regarded as a heretic, and at that time the Buddhist religion extended over as large a portion of India as is represented by the immense body of the asura. The headquarters of Buddhism were at Gayā; the attempt of the gods to hold down the head of the giant represents the attempt of the Brāhmans to attack the heretical system at its great stronghold; and Vishnu's mace represents the appeal to force where reasoning and the milder measures had proved of no avail. The gods blessed the means employed, and made what was once the head of a heretical creed the most beneficial place of pilgrimage for the faithful.

The Hindus have appropriated the chief places of this district, as well as those in Orissa and elsewhere, that once were sacred to the Buddhists. The footmarks of Vishnu in the chief Buddhist temple at Buddha Gayā are religiously worshipped by them, and the same Purāna which praises Gayā as a place of pilgrimage for Hindus teaches that, before offering the cakes for their ancestors, they must first visit and worship the sacred pipul-tree near the Buddhist temple, under which Buddha is said to have meditated, as the dwelling-place of Vishnu. And though this tree is five miles distant from the Hindu Gayā, in that book the whole district is spoken of as sacred, though some parts of it are said to be more sacred than others, especially a small well called Gayā-siras, the Head of Gayā. It is here that the town called by the people Purāna Gayā stands, which is almost exclusively occupied by the Gawāl priests, who are called into requisition for funeral ceremonies in all parts of India. As many as six hundred families live there, but as they only intermarry amongst themselves, the race appears to be dying out. Other parts have special names—Rāma Gayā, Vishnu Gayā, which are specially sacred to the deities named here.

### *Puri.**

Amongst the most popular places of pilgrimage is Puri, the town in which the temple of Jagannātha stands. The whole province of Orissa is regarded as holy; the many temples, and particularly the one at Puri, give it this special sanctity. "Its whole extent is one uninterrupted tirtha. Its happy inhabitants live secure of a reception into the world of spirits, and those who even visit it and bathe in its sacred rivers, obtain

* See Dr. Ragendra Lall Mittra's work on Orissa.

remission of their sins, though they weigh like mountains. Who shall adequately describe its sacred streams, its temples, its khetras, its fragrant flowers, and all the merits and advantages of a sojourn in such a land? What necessity, indeed, can there be for enlarging on the praise of a region which the Devatās themselves delight to inhabit?* However popular some of the other temples of Orissa may have been in past times, it is to Jagannātha-Khetra that the bulk of the pilgrims wend their way, and with "seeing" the deity there generally remain content.

The name Puri signifies "the city," it being regarded by many Hindus as the most important place on earth. It is built on the sandy shore of the Bay of Bengal, and the hill on which the temple stands is only about twenty feet higher than the surrounding plain. One of the strangest facts about the temple and its great inhabitant is this, that whilst he is regarded as the incarnation of Vishnu, the mildest and most genial of deities, in European writings he is styled the Moloch of India. It is true that many have perished under the wheels of his car; but this has not been because they imagined blood to be an acceptable offering to him. In some cases those who sacrificed themselves felt secure of heaven if they died within the limits of the holy place, and did not wish to return to the world, where further sin was possible; in others, whilst familiar with the cruel rites pleasing to Devi, but ignorant of Jagannātha's character, imagined that their voluntary immolation would please him. Pilgrims start on a protracted course of wandering, and whilst familiar with the tenets of the sect in which they have been initiated, and the character of their own

* "Kapila Sanhitā," quoted in As. Soc. Journal, vol. xv. p. 166.

chosen deity, do not know much about others. It is also possible that, in a few cases, in the excitement of the moment, not as a premeditated act of devotion, they have cast themselves under the wheels of the car, in the hope that such complete self-sacrifice could not fail to receive its reward. In the character of Jagannātha, and the rites performed in his worship, there is nothing to lead men to regard him as a deity delighting in death, but the very opposite.

The town of Puri has nothing attractive save its temples and maths, or monasteries. It is composed largely of ruined huts, with a fixed population of about 23,000. At the great festivals from 60,000 to 100,000 pilgrims are present. Its history divides itself into three periods:

1. The Early Hindu Period. The authority for this are the Skanda, Kurma, and Nārada Purānas. The legends are written to cast a halo of glory round the place, which was then growing in popularity. The information is given in answer to an inquiry why Vishnu is represented by a log of wood.

Brahmā, distressed that he had not provided sufficient means for human salvation, asked Vishnu to provide a simple one. Brahmā was reminded that those who were earnest in their search for that blessing could obtain it by living in the abode of the divinity by the seashore. Vishnu went on to say: "On the north shore of the sea to the south of the Mahānadi River is my favourite abode, which can confer the blessings to be derived from all the other sacred places on the earth put together. Those wise sons of Manu who reside there enjoy the fruits of the good deeds performed by them in previous births. . . . None who has little merit or is weak in faith, can live there. . . . The

Blue Hill (the site of the temple) is the most sacred place on earth; most difficult of access even to you (Brahmā). I dwell there in a bodily form, and that holy spot, rising above all mutability, is unassailable by creation and destruction. As you see me here, so you will see me there. On that Blue Hill to the west of the Kalpa fig-tree, there is a fountain named Rohinā; dwelling near it men may see me with their mortal eyes, and washing off their sins with its water, attain equality with me." This does not refer merely to moral, but also bodily, likeness; for on Brahmā's visiting the place, he saw a crow plunge into the water of the fountain, and come out of it the counterpart of Vishnu, and at once made its way to his heavenly abode. Brahmā was convinced of the excellency of the place, and determined to enhance it. Amongst its many virtues is this, Yama has no control over those who die there, for their souls at once obtain complete salvation, and it is not subject to decay, but will continue in its glory when all other holy places have been swept away.

The same authority gives the following account of the building of the temple. In the earliest stage of its existence, Puri was a forest, having the Blue Hill in the centre, the Kalpa tree on its brow, the sacred fountain of Rohinā on the west, and on its side an image of Vishnu in sapphire. This stone gave its name to the image, the blue jewel. Indradyumna, King of Malwa, hearing from an ascetic of the glories of the place, and the benefits to be obtained from worshipping there, determined to visit it. Before setting out, he thought it advisable to send an officer to see if this account were true. His priest's brother went, and saw a number of Brāhmans who had been changed into Vishnu's form,

each having four arms. The chief of the community was unwilling at first to allow the officer to see the sacred bower, but afterwards consented, and gave him a wreath of flowers, which was taken from the neck of the god.

On the return of his minister the king was anxious to start without delay, and when he reached the borders of Orissa, he was met by its king, and together they worshipped Siva under the usual form of a linga in the place to which Vishnu had exiled him when he drove him from Benares. He then proceeded to the secret temple, but was greatly disappointed to find that the sapphire image had sunk into the sand, and the deity had gone to Pātāla, the nether regions. At first he was inconsolable, but Nārada comforted him as he assured him that he could make a wooden image, the sight of which would obtain as great comfort for mankind as though they saw the god himself. He also advised him to sacrifice 1000 horses, as a means of securing great good for himself and others. This was commenced with great pomp, and on the seventh night of the ceremony the king had a dream, which rewarded him for all his trouble. He saw a tree, within which were Vishnu, accompanied by his wife Lakshmi, and Ananta. In his hands were the usual emblems—the conch, discus, mace, and lotus; and by his side the wonder-working wheel, Sudarsana. A few days after this, a log of wood was washed ashore bearing the marks of Vishnu. This was regarded as the fulfilment of the dream. From this log images of Jagannātha, his brother Balarāma, his sister Subhadrā, and the Sudarsana were formed. When these were completed, at Indradyumna's request, Brahmā and other gods came to assist at their consecration, and the inauguration of the worship of Vishnu under the form of Jagannātha at Puri.

2. The Buddhist Period. The temple records ignore the very existence of Buddhism, and invent stories of the district being overcome by Mussulmāns and others; but at one time Puri was an important centre of Buddhistic teaching. This is evident from the statement that when the asura Gayā lay stretched out upon the ground his head was at Gayā, and his navel at Puri. There is much to be said in favour of the idea that the relic, enshrined in the image of Jagannātha, which is carefully transferred whenever a new image is made, and which the Hindus believe to be the bones of Krishna, is the tooth of Buddha. This relic, or something that was regarded as such, was carefully preserved, and a magnificent Dagoba was erected, at a place called Dantapura, as its shrine. Where Dantapura was situated is uncertain; but it is probable that it was at Puri, and that the building erected to shelter the tooth of Buddha has given place to the temple in which the image of Jagannātha is worshipped. A careful examination of Vaishnavism, as celebrated at this place, shows that the main lessons of Buddhism have been accepted, and its emblems so modified, as to be accepted by Vaishnava sects.

3. The Vaishnava Period. As far as can be known, about the close of the fifth century of the present era, a king, named Yayāti Kesāri, came from Magadha and established, or re-established, Hindu-Brāhmanical worship at Puri, where Buddhism had for centuries held sway. This king is said also to have made preparations for the erection of the great tower at Bhuvaneshwara, where Siva-worship has its stronghold in Orissa. This may be true. Instances are known of men erecting temples for, and supporting the worship of, several deities at the same time; or it may be that he changed the object of his worship—he who at one time was a

worshipper of Vishnu became as earnest a follower of Siva.

The king, finding a Buddhist temple with its three mystic monograms, together with the wheel of the law, before which the people bowed in worship, Yayāti declared that they were representations of Vishnu, his brother and sister, and his wonderful discus. Hindu priests took possession, changed the mantras used in the services, and, to some extent, the ritual also. He probably repaired the temple, and slightly altered the images; but it is unlikely that he did more. At first the alterations would be as few as possible, in order that the new system might appear to be only a development of the one with which the people had been familiar.

The present building was completed in 1196. A king of Orissa, named Kāmadeva, pulled down the old one, which had become dilapidated, and collected materials for a new one; but after working at it for five years he died. His son, Madan Mahādeva, was engaged at the time in building a temple at a place eight miles from Puri; and as soon as this was finished, he turned his attention to the work commenced by his father. But after reigning four years only, he died, and his brother, Ananga Bhima, succeeded to the throne, and took up with energy the work of re-building the great temple. He took as his model the tower of Bhuvaneshwara, but surpassed his model in beauty and grandeur. This man having been guilty of the almost unpardonable sin of killing a Brāhman tried to make expiation by erecting temples, an bridges, making good roads, digging tanks, etc. Jagan nātha appeared to him in a dream, and told him to go to Puri and there call upon his name. It was to

the effort of the king to atone for this sin that the temple owes its completion. His descendants are the guardians of the shrine, and glory in the title of "the Sweepers of the sacred Temple."

During the reign of his successor, Pratāparudra, Chaitanya, the great reformer of Bengal, lived there for years, and greatly changed the character of the Vishnu worship. He taught that trust in the deity was far more acceptable than fastings, penance, and the performance of religious rites. Hitherto fear had been the most conspicuous emotion in worship; he taught that man should cherish the most passionate love towards his deity. The Buddhist character of the place served his purpose. The name of the deity Jagannātha, the Lord of the World, was suited to his world-wide idea of brotherhood. Caste had been almost destroyed by Buddhism; Chaitanya taught that, within the temple enclosure, all men were brethren, and therefore, those of different castes might eat together of food made sacred by being presented to the deity. Aided by the Rāja, who became one of his most devout disciples, the ritual was changed and the mystic songs of Jayadeva were sung at the morning and evening worship of the god; and the "Lord of the World" was regarded very much as a man with human sympathies. "The divinity ceased; and in his place rose the being who may be looked upon at option as the master, friend, parent, or mistress of the worshippers; and his service was modelled accordingly. A human being on rising from bed must first wash his face and brush his teeth; and the first service was accordingly made to typify washing and brushing. Bathing, breakfast, recreations, dining, and sleeping all followed by symbolisms, and the service of the divinity was changed

to the service of man. This anthropomorphic form of worship, first introduced by Chaitanya, still obtains, and traits of it will be seen in the accounts of the feasts and festivals connected with the worship at this place. The memory of the reformer is held in the highest veneration, and there are upwards of eight hundred temples devoted to his worship in Orissa."

It has been frequently stated that the worship of Jagannātha is associated with much that is licentious. Dr. Hunter and Mr. Fergusson state that it is on temples of Vishnu that the more indecent sculptures are found; Dr. Mittra distinctly and emphatically denies this. He says that in the Central Provinces and Orissa, these representations are at least as common on Siva temples as on those of the incarnations of Vishnu; and concludes by saying: "As a Hindu by birth, and Vaishnava by family religion, I have had access to the innermost sanctuaries, and to the most secret of Scriptures; I have studied the subject most extensively, and have had opportunities of judging which no European can have, and I have no hesitation in saying that, the 'mystic songs' of Jayadeva and the 'Ocean of Love' notwithstanding, there is nothing in the ritual of Jagannātha which can be called licentious."

During the Mussulmān rule the images of this, as well as of other temples were destroyed, but it is believed that before the attack, the relics were removed, and, when safer times came, placed in a new image; so that though the perishable part of the deity has been frequently changed, that which gives special sanctity to it continues unimpaired.

The large temple stands on a mound about 20 feet high. The outer courtyard, 665 feet by 644 feet, is enclosed by a thick stone wall 22 feet high, of much

later date than the building itself. There are four gateways; the principal one being on the east side, in front of which is a splendid stone pillar that was brought from the Sun Temple at Konāsak. The building itself is of the pyramidal form common in Orissa.

Besides the chief figures for whose worship the temple was erected, there are others occupying less conspicuous positions. On the staircase by which the pilgrims enter are images of Siva and Rāmachandra. On the right is the Snān-Vedi, or platform on which the god is bathed at the great festival of the Snān Jātra. Near to this is a small pavilion in which the goddess Lakshmi is placed to witness this ceremony; whilst on the opposite side of the courtyard is a similar pavilion in which she sits to welcome him on his return from his annual ride. Near by is the room in which sacred food is cooked, and as a covered way leads from it to the temple, it can be carried without fear of defilement into the presence of the god. There is also a house called Vaikuntha, the heaven of Vishnu, in which rich pilgrims ratify their gifts to the temple; and a place where the old and disused images are buried.

The inner enclosure, 400 feet by 278 feet, is secured by double walls, with a space of 11 feet between them, which, in case of need, can be filled with earth to strengthen the defence. The centre of this enclosure is occupied with the great temple, as well as a number of smaller shrines. The most important object to the pilgrims is a sacred tree, under which the messenger from Indradyumna met the keeper of the forest; but as the tree now growing is the Vata (*Ficus Indica*), and the one mentioned in the legend is the Asvattha (*Ficus religiosa*), and as the present one is not more than two hundred years old, it cannot be the identical tree.

Probably it stands where a noted tree that was sacred to the Buddhists once grew. It is called the Kalpa-briksha, and has the virtue of making barren women fruitful. When visited for this purpose the woman spreads a cloth on the ground, and if, within a reasonable time, a fruit falls on it, it is a sign that the god is propitious and will bestow the desired boon. The Kapila Sanhita declares, "whoever stands under the shadow of this tree, immediately clears himself from the sin of killing Brāhmans; and whoever walks round it and worships it, Hari remits all his sins committed in the course of a hundred generations. At its foot is an image of Mangalā, the giver of prosperity to the gods; whoever beholds and adores her emancipates himself from all delusion." Near this is a hall, open on all sides, where pundits read the Sāstras, and a small lake in which the crow dipped and came out in Vishnu's likeness. A representation of this metamorphose is on a stone close by. Strange to say, there is a shrine of Devi, the wife of Siva, to whom once a year a kid is sacrificed. This is in a place sacred to Vishnu, who is supposed to regard the taking of life, whether of men or animals, as a great sin. It should be stated, however, that the pundits deny that this glaring inconsistency is practised. There is also a temple of Lakshmi, the wife of Vishnu, who, though not enshrined in the chief temple with her spouse, takes a prominent part in his annual worship; and one of the Sun; but this image is hidden by those of Rādhā and Krishna, so that it can only be seen by going behind these later additions.

The temple has four chief rooms—first the Bhoga Mandapa, or Hall of Offerings, 58 feet by 56 feet; this leads to the Dancing Hall, 69 feet by 67 feet, in which, on certain occasions, amusements for the god of the

temple are provided. Leading out of this are four smaller rooms, in one of which Siva is represented by the linga; another is devoted to Krishna; a third is called Lakshmi's dressing-room, as it is here that she is got ready to take part in the festival; and a fourth is for the musicians of the temple, who play daily at certain portions of the service. In these rooms there are sculptures of a most obscene character. Then comes the porch or audience chamber of the temple, 80 feet by 80; and finally the temple or shrine proper, also 80 feet by 80. Three niches in the shrine contain figures of Vishnu's incarnations, as the Boar, the Man-lion, and the Dwarf. In the plinth is a small niche, in which is a figure of a man with hands and feet in chains. This represents the eleventh day of the lunar month, which widows observe as a strict fast, and which Hindus of both sexes regard as specially holy. To have one day in a month observed as a fast where the priests make profits out of the food sold, would not pay. A story has therefore been written, to the effect that Ekadasi (the 11th) contended with the genius of the temple in favour of his fast being observed here; but Jagannātha contended that though the law was good elsewhere, his will was higher than the law. As, however, Ekadasi was not satisfied, he was chained, as a warning against those who dared to resist the authority of the "Lord of the World," and as an encouragement to nervous Hindus, who otherwise might fast on this day at Puri.

"All the four gates of the sacred enclosure are left open until a late hour at night, but the rule is that, except in the case of special permits, granted by the Khurda Rāja (the custodian of the temple), pilgrims should enter by the east gate, turn to the left in the inner enclosure,

circumambulate the great temple once, thrice, or even seven times, and then enter the Dancing Hall by the north door. Proceeding thence to the audience chamber (or porch), and standing in front of a log of sandal-wood, which cuts off further approach, they behold the Lord of the universe on his sanctum in front. Persons paying largely are allowed to cross the bar, and enter the sanctum. Those having special permits, which cost from Rs. 500 to Rs. 5000, enter by the south gate, and have the right of getting into the inner enclosure, which is cleared of other visitors for the time they remain inside. They, of course, have the right of entering the sanctum itself. This sanctum is so dark, that, without the aid of a lamp, nothing is visible within even at midday. Going thrice round the temple at noon with the sun glaring on the whitewashed houses, and devoting the greater part of the time in looking upwards towards the cornice and the tops of the temples and other erections, to which their attention is constantly directed by the cicerones, the eyes of the pilgrims get so dazed, that it is impossible immediately after to see anything placed in a dark corner; and under the best of circumstances the poor pilgrims, standing before the sandal-wood bar, see very little. Even those who get beyond the bar cannot see much at first, until their eyes adjust themselves to the light. The priests attribute this to the effect of sin, which renders carnal eyes unfit to behold the divinity. When that sin is destroyed by devotion, the divinity becomes visible." As the great object of the pilgrims visiting Puri is to see Jagannātha, many return without being able to gratify their desire.

Dr. Mittra tells a story of a Rāja, who, lax in morals and of thrifty habits, having failed to see the image after walking round the temple at midday, prayed and vowed

to do a number of good deeds if only he could see it. Returning the next day, and passing into the sanctum without walking round the temple, his eyes were opened, and he was able to see the god! Dr. Mittra's own experience is quite as amusing. After walking round the temple, as he could see but little, he asked the attendant priest to conduct him three times round the throne, during which his eyes became accustomed to the darkness. On his return to the front, he could see distinctly.

A miracle of the place is carefully pointed out to the pilgrim. It is said that the roar of the sea so terrified Subhadrā, the sister of Jagannātha, whose image stands next to his own, that it caused her hands and arms to shrink into her body. Whereupon her brother forbade the noise of the waters to enter the sacred enclosure. And it is a fact, that though the sound of the "sad sea waves" is heard distinctly outside, owing to the high walls which surround the temple, and the noise of the multitudes of people near, it is scarcely audible within. But no miracle is wanted to account for this.

The images in the chief shrine are made of iron-wood, hard and close-grained, and capable of taking a high polish. It is so bitter that insects will not eat it. Each is formed of a solid block of wood, and is an ugly and extremely rude imitation of the human figure. They have no hands or feet; but to the stumps of arms golden hands are attached. Subhadrā's arms are supposed to be lying by her side, whilst those of her brothers are nailed on to their bodies. Jagannātha is painted black, Balarāma white; whilst their sister is golden coloured. The figures of the male deities are six feet high; that of Subhadrā about four and a half feet. The Sudarsana is a mere stump about six feet high, on which Dr. Mittra could see no mark of the wheel, but which the priest

declared has it on the top. Several times a day the dresses and ornaments of the images are changed, but none, save the priests, are allowed to see them in their native ugliness. The people admit that they are not beautiful, and the following legend accounts for it.

When King Indradyumna determined to establish the worship of Vishnu under this form, he applied to Visvakarma, the architect of the gods, to assist him in the erection of the temple and the construction of the image. To this he consented on the understanding that he was to be allowed to work without being overlooked. The king agreeing, the work was commenced forthwith, and the temple rose under the magic touch of Visvakarma. But the image occupied a longer time. The king restrained his impatience for a fortnight, but at last his curiosity mastered him, and as he was peeping over the wall, the god noticed him, and at once left his work and returned to his heavenly home. The king, seeing the unfinished images, was greatly distressed, but Brahmā and the other deities consoled him with the promise that they would be present at their installation, and that, ugly though the images were, the worship of them would become most popular. This prediction has been fulfilled as far as Puri is concerned, and at other places the people do not see any incongruity in worshipping these ugly deformities.

Other stories are told to account for these strange figures being adored, but probably the true explanation is that they are modifications of the old Buddhist worship. The Sudarsana is the wheel of the Law—the only object placed in Buddhist temples before images of Buddha became common ; whilst the three figures are modified forms of a monogram composed of the initial letters of the five elements—air, fire, water, earth, and ether—

which in Pali characters do not look unlike the representatives of Jagannātha and his companions.

The images are renewed from time to time, as the old ones become unfit for further duty. The best time for doing this work is when the month of Āsādha becomes an intercallary one; but, as it is believed that the king in whose reign the change is made dies soon after, there is not much inducement for any one to make it. When this renewal takes place, the relic is taken from the old ones and put into the new, the old ones then being solemnly buried. A great mystery attaches to this relic. The priests refused to tell Dr. Mittra what it was; and there is every reason to believe that it is a Buddhist remain. When hard pressed by rich pilgrims, the priests do not like to refuse to say, so give various stories to quiet the importunity of the questioner. Some say it is a part of the original image, the wood of which came floating in from the sea; others that it is a bone of Krishna. A Hindu clerk at Cuttack, in a history of Puri, declares that "a boy from a potter's family is selected to take out from the breast of the old idol a small box of quicksilver, said to be the spirit, which he conveys inside the new." The boy who renders this service dies within the year.

These images are placed on a platform, four feet high and sixteen feet long. They are not moved except at the great festivals. Their dresses are changed frequently, and the transformation is so great that they look like different objects at different times of the day. Amongst others is one called Buddhavesa, the garb of Buddha, an incidental proof of the identity of this worship with Buddhism. On certain days the image is dressed in boys' clothes to represent incidents in the life of Krishna. When robed in this fashion, a rope is tied round his

waist and fastened to a post to represent the way in which he was tied by his foster-mother to prevent him from stealing the curds. At other times he wears the dress peculiar to Ganesa, and, to make the resemblance complete, has a trunk attached to his face, like that of the elephant-headed god of wisdom.

The daily service of the temple is similar to that of other deities as described in the account of Bhuvaneshwara. It begins by ringing a bell to awake the sleeping deity; offerings and the repetition of mantras go on until about eleven p.m., when a bedstead is placed before it, and it is invited to retire for the night. Small quantities of food are brought into the sanctuary itself, which is for the priests only; but at the four principal meals, large quantitics of food are consecrated by being placed in front of the idol. Sweetmeats of a special kind are prepared at the palace of the Rāja of Khurda, and sent to the temple daily, the proceeds of which are given to him; the money received from the sale of the other sacred food being taken by the priests. When it is remembered that on some days food for a hundred thousand people is sold, it will be seen that the yearly profits must be something enormous.

The food is cooked by low caste men, the descendants of the woodman who conducted Indradyumna to the original shrine; but such is the sanctifying effect of this holy place, that it is cheerfully eaten by people of all castes. It is carried away by the pilgrims, and regarded as a sacred treasure. A single grain on cakes offered at the funeral ceremonies of the dead, is believed, by the Vaishnavas, to be more effectual in benefiting the departed than anything that could be offered. It is called Mahaprasād, and the gods, even, are said to be delighted to obtain a portion. The greatest sins are

removed the moment a grain of it touches the tongue. Legends such as the following are circulated to strengthen the faith of the people. A man of high caste came to see Jagannātha, but would not touch what he regarded as unclean food. After leaving the city, his arms and legs fell off, and in that helpless condition he remained, until a dog happened to drop a few grains of this holy rice from his mouth. The man managed to crawl to the spot, and, licking it up, Jagannātha forgave his pride, and caused his limbs to grow again.

In connection with the worship of Jagannātha, a number of festivals are held, which increase the popularity of the idol, and bring pilgrims in greater numbers to its shrine. Some of these are to celebrate a particular season of the year; some are held to recall to memory events in the life of the deity during his sojourn on earth. We shall follow a calendar peculiar to Orissa, according to which the year begins with the month Agrahāyana (Nov.-Dec.).

*Ghornāgi* is held on the sixth of the waning moon of the first month of the year. The images are clad in shawls and costly garments. This day is set apart by some women as a day of fasting for the benefit of their sons.

*Abhisheka*, or the coronation, when the images are arrayed in royal robes.

*Markara* is the day of the Sun's entry into the sign of Capricornus on his return to the north. It is a day of feasting and general rejoicing.

*The Dol Jātra or Holi.* Next to the Snān and Rath Jātras, this is the most popular festival at Puri. It is a festival, with modern innovations, that was held in Vedic times to celebrate the return of spring. In all countries this has been a season of merriment, and the

people of India commemorate it much in the same way as was common in Rome. Drinking, buffoonery, licentious talk and gestures prevail, and red powder is thrown on people walking in the streets. It is called the Dole, or Swinging Festival, because the images of Krishna, or his representatives, are placed on a swing for their amusement. It is celebrated with greater or less expense in most of the Vaishnava temples, and fun and frolic form the chief part of the ceremonies. At Puri, owing to the weight of the idols, they are not swung, but other images are substituted for them. Another reason for relieving Jagannātha and his companions from swinging was that the red powder thrown on them, injured the paint. The ceremony at the temple lasts for one day only, but the merriment in the streets continues longer.

*Rāma navami* is kept as the birthday of Rāma. As Jagannātha is a later incarnation of the same deity, on this occasion he is dressed and worshipped as Rāma.

*Chandana Jātra*, or Flower Festival. The proxies Madanamohana and four lingas are carried to a small temple, on an island in the Norendra tank, where they remain twenty-one days. Every evening they are taken for a row on the lake, flowers and sandal-wood are presented, and the worshippers entertained with singing and dancing.

*Rukmini harana.* This is to celebrate Krishna's carrying off his wife Rukmini, who was originally betrothed to Sisupāla. At Puri, Madanamohana, as Jagannātha's substitute, is carried to a neighbouring garden, and is supposed to steal his bride. They are afterwards married at night under a sacred tree in the enclosure of the temple.

The *Snān Jātra* is held to commemorate the day

when the first image was commenced by Indradyumna. The images are brought out from the sanctum and bathed at midday with water taken from a well near the sacred tree, and then dressed in beautiful robes. After the ceremonies of the bath, they are taken to a small room called the Sick Chamber, where they remain for a fortnight, to recover from a fever resulting from their unusual exposure when bathing. During this time the doors of the temple are closed, to allow an opportunity for the images being re-painted. It will easily be understood that a fresh coat of paint is necessary when it's remembered that all kinds of offering are thrown upon them daily.

The *Rath Jātra*. Resplendent in their new paint, the gods are exposed to the public gaze as they are taken for a ride upon their raths or chariots. These immense cars are made according to fixed rules as to size and form. The height of Jagannātha's car is 45 feet; that of Balarāma, 44 feet; that of Subhadrā, 43 feet. The first car has sixteen wheels with sixteen spokes each; the second, fourteen wheels with fourteen spokes; the third, twelve wheels with twelve spokes. They are clumsily built, and can with difficulty be moved. When the time comes for the ride, the lady is carried on men's shoulders; the other two are dragged, by a silk cord, up an inclined plane to their seat on the car, by people of the same caste as those who cook the food in the temple. When placed in their seats, the images are dressed in gorgeous robes, and golden arms and hands are attached to them.

When all is ready, the Rāja of Khurda, the "Sweeper of the Temple," descends from his elephant about a hundred yards away from the cars, and sweeps the road until he reaches them. He then worships the images,

makes his offering, and touches the ropes as a signal for hundreds of coolies, who, hold their land rent free for this service, aided by the voluntary effort of thousands of pilgrims, set the ponderous cars in motion.

They are dragged to a suite of temples about two miles distant. The journey occupies four days; and on their arrival the image of Lakshmi is taken from the Puri temple to see her lord. After remaining here four or five days, the cars are brought back, and on their arrival, Lakshmi, as a faithful wife, is waiting in a pavilion to welcome her husband home.

Much speculation has arisen as to the origin of this festival. In all probability it is a continuation of a Buddhist festival to celebrate the birth of that saint. There is evidence to show that it was common for images of Buddha to be dragged through the streets in this manner; whilst there is nothing in the older Hindu books, nor any tradition of this practice being common among the Hindus. The reasons for believing that it is of Buddhistic origin are the following: Puri was one of the chief centres of Buddhism; the images of Jagannātha and his companions are modifications of Buddhist emblems; the existence of a relic in the idol is almost peculiar to this temple; caste differences are obliterated at Puri; Jagannātha takes the place of Buddha in the representations of Vishnu's incarnations, although, according to the Vishnu Purāna, he was an incarnation of Vishnu for the purpose of deceiving mankind; and at this season of the year a car festival was common amongst the Buddhists in honour of Buddha's birthday.

*Sayana Ekadasi.* This day is observed with feasting and rejoicing, and at night the three deities, represented by small gold idols, are put to bed for four months. Some say it is to represent Vishnu's descent to Pātāla;

ers that it is to commemorate his sleep upon the an. The probable reason is that being the rainy son, travelling is difficult, and the professional ;rims remain in the monasteries instead of wandering ›ut. The more pious Hindus regard it as a season en they should be unusually abstemious, as in ristian homes the season of Lent is observed. During se months weddings are not celebrated; nor, as a e, are the temples of the gods visited.

*Janmāshtami*, *i.e.* the birthday of Krishna at Mathura. is festival, common throughout the whole of North lia, is here celebrated with great *éclat*, and eye-nesses declare that, in the presence of a crowd, a ıcing girl plays the part of the mother, and the eremony of his nativity is performed to the life." e story is as follows: Krishna's mother fell asleep as ›n as he was born, and to save him from the hands of cruel uncle his father took him to the home of a cow-:per's wife, and changed him for her newly-born girl, om he placed by the side of his sleeping wife. Dr. ttra denies that there is any obscenity in the repre-ıtation. It is a delicate subject for representation, l, as I have heard it described by Hindus, it is not ›resented in the most delicate manner. Attached to : temple are girls, as dancers and singers, who are d to be married to the deity, of whom the most that . Mittra can say is that they are not more unchaste ın the ballet girls of Europe. These are professional ;tal virgins, and it may be, of course, that some re-ıin pure; but the common belief amongst the Hindus emselves is that this is a rare exception, and the one ected for taking the part of Krishna's mother is no tter than the rest.

*Kāliya damana;* the slaying of the serpent Kāliya

in the river Yamuna by Krishna. Jagannātha's image is wrapped round with an imitation serpent, made of cloth, whilst his proxy is carried to a tank close by, with music and singing, where he is supposed to slay the demon.

*Vāmanjanam.* On this day Jagannātha is dressed to represent Vishnu when he appeared on earth as a dwarf.

*Utthāpana Ekadasi* is the day when Vishnu awakes from his sleep. The metal images are aroused, bathed, dressed, and worshipped in due form.

The garden-house to which Jagannātha is taken in his car is said to be the place where Indradyumna pitched his tent when he first came there to worship; it was here that he performed his great horse sacrifice; and it was near here that the log of wood is said to have been washed ashore which was used in making his image.

At Bhuvaneshwara, where Siva is worshipped as supreme, Vishnu and his consort are made guardians of the city; here, as Vishnu is the chief deity, Siva and his wife, in eight different forms, have the duty of wardens of the city assigned to them.

### *Bhuvaneshwara.*

In former years this was far more attractive to pilgrims than it is at present. Some call on their way to or from Puri, and pay their respects to the great deity whose worship is carried on here; the majority are content with the expense and labour of a visit to Jagannātha.

The linga, the common representation of Siva, being an upright pillar of stone, fixed in its place, does not admit of the same variety of ceremonies as are possible

with movable images such as those at Puri; but though differing in form, they are much the same in spirit.

The image is daily bathed with water, milk, and bhang, and large quantities of food are placed before it. Flowers, sandal-wood, and clothes, are also presented. The service begins at dawn with the ringing of a bell to wake the god; a lamp is then moved about in front to light him as he gets up. He is supposed to clean his teeth as the attendant priest moves about a small stick, bruised at one end, similar to what is used by a Brāhman for that purpose, and to wash his face, as a bowl of water and towel are brought. For his bath, water, ghi, and milk are thrown over the stone, which is afterwards washed and dried. The image is then dressed for the day. A light breakfast of sweetmeats is given, which is followed a couple of hours later with the regular meal. At eleven o'clock other food is presented, and, after a little incense has been burned, the priest closes the temple for the deity to enjoy his midday repose. At four o'clock the doors are again opened, and similar ceremonies are repeated through the evening until bedtime, when the deity is invited to repose, with the phrase that "Parvati awaits her lord." Twenty-two ceremonies are performed on ordinary days; at festivals others are added, for each of which there are the proper mantras or texts to be recited. The festivals are mostly to commemorate events connected with the history of Siva; though several others have been arranged in order to attract the people, when there is something special at the temples of other gods.

The chief festivals are the following:—

*Prathamāstimi.* On this occasion a small image

called Chandrasekhara is taken from its shrine, as a substitute for Bhuvaneshwara, placed on a car with much pomp, and taken to a tank which has the power to wash away sin; after the bath it is dressed in new clothes, and brought back amidst a crowd sometimes numbering as many as ten thousand people.

*Pravaranotsava* is held when the cold season is considered to have fairly set in. The flat stone forming the base of the image has warm clothes placed upon it; from its shapeless form it cannot be properly robed.

*Pushya Jātra.* On this occasion 108 pitchers of water brought from the Vindu Sāgara Lake are poured over the image, after which it is dressed in new clothes, presented with a garland of mustard flowers, and regaled with music and singing.

*Markara.* This is held on the day when the sun commences his return to the north. On this occasion, too, 108 pitchers of water are thrown over the idol, and offerings of new rice, fruits, etc., are made. This is a sort of harvest festival.

*Māgha Saptami, i.e.* the seventh day of the new moon in the month of Māgh. The image mentioned before as Siva's substitute is taken to a temple of Bhaskareshwara (Lord of the Sun), a mile distant, adorned with new clothes, feasted and worshipped. The linga is not carried about, because it is too heavy to move, and it is also taught that when once fixed in its place it is a sin to move it. Hence many are left amid ruined temples.

*Sivarātri,* or the night of Siva. The origin of this festival is given in the following legend: A fowler having lost his way, took refuge in a bêl-tree, and his tears falling on a decayed leaf, carried it to a linga that happened to be near. The deity was delighted with

this unintentional offering, and the pious Saivites fast during the day and worship Siva at the four watches of the night. At Bhuvaneshwara a hundred thousand bêl leaves are offered to an image representing half Vishnu and half Siva.

*Asokāshtami.* This day is sacred because Sitā, when confined by Rāvana in Ceylon, offered asoka leaves to induce Siva to assist her to regain her liberty. At Bhuvaneshwara Siva's substitute is carried to a temple of Rāma, where it remains for a few days. As this corresponds to the Car Festival at Puri, the practices of that ceremony are most closely followed.

*Daman-bhangika Jātra.* As on this day Jagannātha is supposed to steal thyme from a neighbouring garden, Siva's representative is exposed on a platform where he receives presents made of thyme.

*Chandana Jātra.* The proxy is taken to a temple on an island in the Vindu Sāgara Lake, where he remains for twenty-two days. Each evening he is rowed about in a boat, and amused with music and dancing, and Bhuvaneshwara himself receives an extra smearing of sandal-wood paste daily.

*Parasurāmāshtama.* On this day Chandrasekhara has another excursion. He is carried in a chair on men's shoulders to a temple of Parasurāma, where he is entertained with flowers, music, and dancing.

*Sayana Chaturdasi.* At this time Siva and Parvati, represented by small images, are put to bed for their long sleep of four months. The day is spent in rejoicing.

*Pavitrapani Jātra* is the day when a new poitra or sacred thread is presented to the god.

*Yamadevitrya.* Yama, the Lord of Hades, on this day was worshipped by his sister Yami, who for her

devotion was rewarded with a long life. At Bhuvaneshwara this is commemorated by Siva's proxy being carried to a temple of Yama. Sisters feed their brothers and present them with new clothes, in imitation of Yami's devotion to her brother.

*Utthān.* This is the festival of awakening the deity after his four months' sleep. The idol is bathed, dressed, and worshipped. At all these and other festivals there are peculiar mantras and slightly differing forms of worship.

A noticeable feature of the worship at this temple is that rice and other kinds of food are cooked, and by being placed before the image are sanctified, so that high caste as well as low caste people can eat it. Evidently this practice has been copied from the rival establishment at Puri, as it is in vogue only at these two shrines. Though many pass within a few miles of this temple on their way to see Jagannātha, they are too excited to call there, and on their return too poor to pay it a visit. There is no lack of legends to prove that it is the most sacred spot on earth, and its deities and tanks most beneficial to mankind. It is an expensive way of getting a blessing, for before they approach the great god, they must present themselves before a colossal figure of the bull Nandi, his vehicle; they must then worship Bhāgavati, Khartikeya, and Ganesa, the guardians of the shrine. On their entrance into the town they must worship Vishnu as represented in a temple called Ananta, as it was by his permission Siva was able to make this secret abode. Vishnu's permission to bathe must be sought, and then a visit be made to the temple of a goddess called Ardhapāpāharini, or "the one who removes half of a man's sins." Then, and not until then, the pilgrim is free to bathe

in the water of the sin-destroying tank. If any of these temples be passed by without presents being offered in them, evil may come.

The lake referred to, the Vindu Sāgara, has great sanctifying powers, because it is affirmed that water from all the sacred tanks in heaven, earth, and the lower regions is constantly falling into it. It is taught, in the common language of panegyric, that once bathing in it will give more merit to the bather than ten visits to the source of the Ganges, Allāhabād, Prayāga, or Gangā Sāgar. It is difficult to estimate what this virtue can be, as a visit to any one of these places is said to wash away all sins of the past, present, and future. In the tank the crocodiles are well behaved, as it is declared that they never seize the pilgrims. Bathing in it is an indispensable part of the pilgrim's duty who visits the shrine.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### RELIGIOUS IDEAS EXPRESSED IN WORSHIP.

*The Unity of the Godhead.* This will seem strange to those who hear of the vast number of deities worshipped in India; yet there is scarcely any article of faith, on which they are more agreed. "God is one without a second," is a phrase on the lips of every one who speaks about the deity. They confess that He is the Creator of all men, whatever their race, colour, and creed, and that He has made the distinctions between Hindus and those of other faiths. They explain their position in this manner: God is so great that He cannot be fully expressed by any one being; all the gods, differing as they do in form and character, represent a part, but only a small part, of His immensity. And they have no difficulty in admitting that Jesus Christ is one of the many partial manifestations of this Great Being, and Christianity another form of religion equally good in itself as Hinduism, though not for them. It is the claim of Christians for the supremacy of Jesus that offends them; were the Christian teacher to speak of Him as one of the Avataras, what he advances in proof of this claim would be freely admitted by most Hindus. As an illustration of the belief in the unity of the Godhead, as has been noticed elsewhere, each deity, in his turn, is extolled as the Supreme, the others

being regarded as emanations from him. The worshipper will use the same epithets in addressing any of the gods. Owing to their faith in many manifestations of the One, the followers of Hinduism are often greatly puzzled to know which is the cause of calamity; hence it is not uncommon for them to make vows to several in succession in the hope that they may discover and be able to appease the one whom they have offended.

*Belief in the holiness of God, and at the same time belief in the immoral character of His incarnations.* When asked the character of God Hindus will glibly repeat a string of attributes, most of which the devout Christian would admit as truly descriptive of God. They will say He is without beginning or end; truthful, holy in nature, righteous in act, pure, merciful, almighty, all-wise, everywhere present; and yet they believe that this same God, when incarnate amongst men, was a "man of like passions with ourselves;" using His greater wisdom and power for the doing of greater evil. The stories of Siva's infidelity towards his wife and their consequent quarrels; Krishna's unbounded licentiousness; Rāma's ignorance of his wife's whereabouts when she was carried off by Rāvana, his inability to rescue her, and to say whether she had continued true to him during her enforced residence in Ceylon, are as fully believed as the moral attributes of God just mentioned. And further, though God is declared to be almighty, demons and men, by their religious fervour, have made the deities tremble lest they should lose their thrones and honours. Hindus admit that they should be sorry for the gods to live near them, and it has passed into a proverb, that whilst the teaching of the gods is good and worthy to be followed, the example they have set is bad and unfit

to be copied. In the present day there are those who try to explain away a good deal of the worst teaching of the Purānas, and to give a poetical interpretation to the stories of the immoralities of the gods; but the people believe these accounts in their literal form, and say that acts permitted to the gods are forbidden to men. The most disgusting stories are found in their sacred books, to explain why certain obscene emblems are worshipped. As soon as the strictly religious part of a festival is over, they see no inconsistency in listening to voluptuous songs and immoral dialogues, provided not for their own delectation only, but for the amusement of the deity also. Generally speaking, they profess to believe in a Deity, who is holy, pure, and good, and, at the same time, in incarnations of Him which are the very opposite in character. And it is difficult to enable them to see any incongruity in this.

*Belief in innumerable incarnations.* The Hindu professes to believe in innumerable incarnations of deity, and finds no difficulty in adding to their number. When any great teacher or reformer arises he is either deified during his lifetime or by his followers after his death. Buddha, although a stern and successful opponent of the popular Hinduism, is now declared to have been Vishnu embodied, who appeared for the purpose of leading the devout worshippers of the gods into heresy, that their power might be diminished. Chaitanya, who three centuries ago was an enthusiastic follower of Krishna, has been exalted to divinity, and is worshipped with as great veneration as the one whose worship he strove to stimulate. So earnest was the devotion of some of Keshub Chandra Sen's followers, that they addressed him in terms differing but little, if at all, from those used in the worship of God. In a less critical age

there is little reason to doubt that he would have been regarded as divine. The addition of gods to the many already accepted is not a difficult task.

*The belief in Māyā.* This term, meaning illusion, plays a very important part in the philosophy of the Hindus, and is largely influential in their religious life. The common notion of the people is, that the universe and all that it contains is an emanation from God, as the snail comes out from the shell, and can at will retire from sight. And yet, though all things are really forms of God, men think of themselves as something different from Him. This is Māyā, or illusion. True wisdom consists in realizing identity with God; when this is done, man's separate existence ends, and he gains true blessedness in reunion with the Divine. The common phrase in use is that creation is the play or sport of God. Tired of being alone, for His own amusement He formed the world from Himself; the pains, miseries, and vexations of life come from the influence of Māyā, from the individual imagining himself to be distinct from God. There are several ways by which this illusion can be overcome. Some seek to overcome it by the observance of the rites of religion; but when gained in this way, it is only a partial, temporary blessedness that is secured. The best way is by meditating on the identity of the soul with God, until the mind becomes conscious of nothing else. In other words, supreme bliss consists in having no knowledge and no desires; in acquiring indifference to heat and cold, hunger and thirst, self and the world. A life of inaction, a life without thought is the ideal. Those who profess to be trying to realize this appear to be almost idiotic, and their life useless to themselves and others. The fact that this is taught to be the noblest life man can live, next to the character

ascribed to the incarnations of deity, is the most complete condemnation of the whole system.

*Pantheism.* Connected with, and, as an outcome from it, is the belief in Pantheism. "God is everything, everything is God" is the common creed. "I am part of God" is the usual reply when an attempt is made to show the evil of sin, and it is affirmed that God, rather than the individual who commits the offence, is really to blame. They will laugh at illustrations such as that of a prisoner who, on his trial for murder, said, "I was impelled by God to strike the man, and am therefore not responsible," to whom the judge replied, "I also am impelled by God to punish you," and go away calm in the assurance of their own innocence. It is generally believed that as God induces men at one time to sin, and at another induces them to do right, the blame and merit are God's, not man's. That we are conscious of freedom, and that upon this rests the possibility of just judgment is treated as part of the illusion of Māyā. It is argued that since God is everywhere, He must be in human souls, and being mightier than the individual, controls their actions.

*Fate.* No doctrine is more commonly and implicitly believed than this, that the varied experiences of a human life are arranged by the deity, and that it is useless to oppose the Divine decrees. As a newly-born child lies by its mother's side, the ruler of the world writes a sketch of its career on its forehead, and what is written is inevitable. It is pathetic to hear a man in sorrow reply to a word of consolation, "It is written," as though this was all that could be said, and submission the only course. It is promised to those who bathe in a tank at Benares, that they can obtain a successful issue for their plans, although the opposite

has been written by the gods. But no one really believes this promise. India needs to learn that it is not enough to pray "God mend all," but that we must do our part in helping Him. This fatalism paralyzes effort, and causes the death of many every year. When an epidemic is devastating the country, preventive and remedial measures will not be tried, because, if it is written that the patient must die, he will die, whatever trouble be taken or expense incurred.

From what has been said, it will be seen that there is little in the example of the gods to lead to purity of heart and life, and that the ritual observed in public and private worship has no tendency in this direction. It occasions no surprise therefore that a man who strictly observes the rules of his caste, repeats the mantras of his guru, and is liberal in his offerings to the temples or gurus, is accounted a good Hindu, whatever his moral character may be. The practical side of religion, as seen in the renunciation of sin and the obtaining of a pure nature, is almost forgotten in Hinduism. There are truthful, pure-hearted men in the community, but it is not their religion that has made them so. The Sālgrāma, the ammonite used as a representative of Vishnu—which is accounted by the Vaishnavas as the most holy thing on earth—is a form into which he is said to have changed himself when his wife metamorphosed one of his mistresses into the Tulsi plant, in order that he might secretly remain near her.

# MORALS.

# CHAPTER I.

## MORALS.

THE question of morals is a very difficult one to write about, as the opinions held by different people are so opposite; more or less plausible reasons can be given for the most diverse.

Arrian, in his "History of India," written in the second century of the Christian era, gives a very glowing account of the morals of the Hindus. Either his knowledge must have been very superficial, or they have greatly deteriorated since his day. Their greatest admirers would admit that, at the present time, his words could only be used in the purest sarcasm. It is possible that he was describing some particular tribes only; the virtues he mentions are conspicuously lacking in the community as a whole. "They are remarkably brave; superior in war to all Asiatics. They are remarkable for simplicity and integrity; so reasonable as never to have recourse to a law-suit, and so honest as neither to require locks to their doors, nor writings to bind their agreements. No Indian was ever known to tell an untruth." We may say truly, if this be a trustworthy account, "How are the mighty fallen."

Writing in Madras at the close of last century, the Abbé Dubois, after a lengthened experience and careful observation, gives perhaps a picture as excessively dark

as Arrian's is bright. "In my opinion the Hindus will remain after another thousand years as they were a thousand years ago. Their reserved and distant intercourse with Europeans will always continue the same, and their abhorrence of the religion, education, and manners of the latter, as well as their other leading prejudices, will continue undiminished. . . . Let Bibles, as many as you please, in every shape and in every style, be translated and circulated among the Hindus; let them, if you wish, be spread in every village, in every cottage, and every family; let the Christian religion be presented to these people under every possible light—I repeat it, with deep sorrow, in my humble opinion (an opinion grounded on twenty-five years of experience) the time of conversion has passed away, and under existing circumstances there remains no human possibility to bring it back. . . . Are we not warranted, on beholding the unnatural and odious worship which prevails all over India, in thinking that these unhappy people are lying under an everlasting anathema; that by obstinately refusing to listen to the voice of the heavens which declare the glory of God, they have for ever rendered themselves unworthy of the Divine favour; that by obstinately rejecting the word of God, which has been in vain announced to them during these last three or four centuries, they have 'filled up the measure of their fathers,' have been entirely forsaken of God, and (what is the worst of Divine vengeance) given over for ever to a reprobate mind on account of the peculiar wickedness of their worship, which supposes in those amongst whom it prevails a degree of perversity far beyond that of old pagan nations?"

In describing the moral condition of the Hindus, I

shall earnestly strive to give a fair and impartial description. I have lived for many years in close intimacy with the people; have conversed with all classes of the community; have spent many happy years in working for their benefit, and, intentionally, shall not write down aught in malice. My wonder is, considering their religious faiths, and the character of the deities they worship, that they are not worse than they are. The people of Europe have been more or less familiar with the example and precepts of Jesus for centuries, and yet how dark a picture can be painted of their moral condition! Is it surprising that Hindus are lacking in many virtues and guilty of many vices when it is remembered that, though their sacred books contain beautiful moral precepts, their deities, during their earthly life, are said to have ignored them? Religion and morality are quite distinct in their judgment. A man may be a most exemplary Hindu, and at the same time guilty of the grossest immorality. Of course all Hindus have not all the vices, neither have all Hindus all the virtues, that are here referred to as belonging to the community.

When a missionary was engaged in the translation of the Scriptures into Bengali, he wanted a word to express the idea of gratitude. After several attempts to explain what gratitude was, his pundit said, "How can you expect to find a word for a virtue that does not exist in a country?" And as there was no Bengali word suitable, one had to be introduced from the Sanskrit—a proof of the absence, up to that time, of the need of this expression. An Englishman, going to India, is astonished to find that there is no term expressive of "Thank you" for little acts of kindness. It is an instance of the way in which "when in Rome we do

as the Romans do," that foreigners, who are careful to recognize kindnesses shown them by those of their own nation, have not forced an expression into general use equivalent to what is found in their own languages. Of course there are expressions which are employed to signify pleasure received from attentions shown; but as a rule those who in their own country would be most particular in manifesting their appreciation of kindness, fall into the way, common in India, of taking these courtesies as a matter of course.

That gratitude, or at any rate the expression of it, cannot be universal, the following statement of a gentleman, who for many years was the principal of a large college, will show. He had laboured most devotedly for the good of his students; had given hours daily to the private instruction of many, who were wishful for further teaching than they could obtain in the college classes, for which he did not receive a single penny. After twenty-five years of such work, he said that the only expression of gratitude he ever received was from one of his old students, who at the time of the occurrence was a station-master on the East India Railway. Stopping at the station, and being anxious to obtain a time-table, the station-master brought one, and when he offered payment it was politely refused, as the young man said he had received many acts of kindness from his professor, and would not take the money.

The truthfulness of this story is not for a moment to be doubted; but the experience of the narrator was exceptional. I have met with old students of our colleges who have expressed their thankfulness for the assistance they have received from our missionaries engaged in educational work, and for the kindness of the Christian public in England in sending ladies to

teach their wives and daughters. Then the faithfulness of soldiers to their salt, as it is termed, *i.e.* their gratitude to those from whom, through many years, they obtained their support, in troublous times has kept those faithful to British rule who otherwise would have taken part with comrades in rebellion. Still it is a fact that gratitude is not a common virtue in India. The Zemindars, who, by the prodigality of the British Government, were raised from mere collectors of revenue into the landholders of Bengal, when any attempt is made to raise the revenue, however necessary the cause, cry out as if an injustice were being done to them! The educated classes write and speak savagely against the Government, because, having provided costly establishments for their instruction, whilst a comparatively small amount is devoted to the education of the masses, it does not also provide employment. Brahmā, the creator, is scarcely worshipped in the present day, because, his work of creation being finished, he has little more to give. Gratitude, in the sense of thankfulness for past favours, is not commonly expressed by the people; though in the sense of expectation of favours to come it is not so uncommon.

Untruthfulness is a very common vice. Of this there can be no doubt in the minds of those who come into personal contact with the people. Among the villagers in some parts of the country, where there is a stronger physique and greater personal bravery, and also amongst the aborigines who inhabit the hills, this general statement would not apply; but of the Bengali it is absolutely true. A gentleman who has lived in the closest intimacy with all classes, and knows their language and habits well, declares that when a question is asked, the full bearing of which on themselves or those connected

with them they cannot see, you may rely upon it that the first answer you receive is false; but that, when they see that the truth cannot injure themselves or any one they care for, they will speak the truth. One of the best educated of our native Christians once said to me, "You who were born in Christian families and have been trained from infancy to speak the truth and to hate lying can have no idea of the difficulty we Bengalis have in overcoming the natural tendency to lying and deceit. You are taught that it is dishonourable to lie; we are taught that the dishonour is not in lying, but in being discovered." And it may be taken as a fact that when an order is disregarded in house or office, or theft committed, it is almost impossible for the culprit to be discovered. Those who know the truth will not inculpate others, but rather deny "with oaths and cursing" all knowledge of the affair. When a tale of wrong-doing of an *employé* is brought by other natives it may be taken as certain that the information is given, not from the wish to boldly speak the truth, but as the outcome of petty spite—a mean manner of revenge. In business transactions their word is not to be trusted. Contracts must be written; for if any profit will arise to the promiser by repudiating his promise, advantage will be taken of the fact that there is no written evidence. There are exceptions to this rule, men whose word can be taken; but these are not numerous. The root cause of this untruthfulness is the natural cowardice of the people, and the fact that, when it served their purpose, the gods themselves—notably Brahmā respecting Siva, and Krishna respecting Rādhā—are represented as resorting to this practice. If lying was lawful for a deity, where can be the harm of a poor weak mortal resorting to the same?

A notable instance of strict truthfulness is seen in the life of the late Bābu Rām Gopāl Ghose. This gentleman had lived in open violation of caste regulation for some time, but afterwards, for family reasons, wished to be recognized again as an orthodox Hindu. His father suggested that he should deny that he had eaten beef, etc.; but he replied, "I would do anything for you, yea, give up my life, but cannot lie."

In corroboration of the opinion now expressed concerning the general untruthfulness of the Hindus, we might quote many writers; one will suffice. "The want of truthfulness leavens the whole being of the Bengali. It is not too much to assert that the mass of Bengalis have no notion of truth and falsehood." *

Akin to lying is theft. Here, again, what is said of the many is not true of all. Amongst the lower orders, which form the servant class in the cities and stations, pilfering is almost universal; and those who, so far as was known, have been honest for years, when a favourable opportunity occurs cannot resist the temptation. Prices are asked for goods of daily consumption higher than those paid; and when this is discovered there is little sense of shame. It is considered a right thing for the servant to obtain a percentage on all money of his master that passes through his hands. So clever and persistent are the people in their efforts to rob that it is impossible to prevent it. A lady may sit in the verandah of her house to see her horse fed; if she turns away for a moment only, a handful of corn is stolen and secreted in the servant's clothes. A man will quietly steal into the cow-shed, before others are stirring, and extract milk from your cow. A servant will accompany you to the bazaar and note the money spent with different shopkeepers,

* G. O. Trevelyan, in "The Competition Wallah."

and force them, after your back is turned, to give them a percentage. "Every agent employed to make a purchase, great or small, pockets a commission unknown to his principals; this commission is called 'dustoori,' or 'the customary sum,' the amount being regulated by the impudence of the buyer and the anxiety of the seller to dispose of his goods." Trevelyan tells a story of a servant, ignorant of the fact that stamps belong to the Government, being sent to purchase some, knocking down the vendor and carrying off his ledger in triumph because he refused to give him his dustoori. Contractors offer to supply goods to the Government at a lower rate than the manufacturers, from whom they must be purchased, they making a profit by giving short weight, which must be shared with the officer who has to receive and pass their goods. A man contracts to purchase salt at a certain price; whilst it is being discharged from the ship the price falls. The merchant hides, and it is less costly for the agent to ignore the contract than to prosecute the contractor. Pickpockets are not common; but children are decoyed into quiet places and robbed of their ornaments, or a number of men combine and set fire to a house, and in the confusion make off with all they can lay their hands on.

The use of abusive language is very common. The people, for the most part peacefully disposed, are nevertheless easily provoked to quarrel, but not easily moved to fight. When an excited Englishman would freely use his fists, and try by physical force to punish an offender, the Bengali is content to use his tongue. Passion, anger, hatred, contempt, were never exhibited, on any stage, with greater power than when two women are engaged in a dispute. The tone and action are quite tragic. The language, attitudes, and grimaces are of the vilest.

They seem to lose all self-respect, and, in order to annoy, have no hesitation in boasting of crimes they have never committed. A man of pure morals will not scruple to say that he has been guilty of immorality with the wife or mother of his opponent; and a woman will make a similar boast of her freedom with the husband of the woman with whom she is quarrelling. The commonest form of abuse is that in which the female relatives of an enemy are declared to be all that is bad.

The Hindus generally, and especially the Bengalis, are a very litigious race. Either Arrian did not know the people, or they have changed. It seems as if they could not be happy without a lawsuit. To many it is an amusement, as hunting and shooting are to the British. "The natives regard a court of law, not as the bulwark of the innocent and the refuge of the wronged, but as a prize-ring which affords a fair field and no favour; a stock exchange where fortunes are to be made by cleverness and industry, and lost by carelessness and stupidity; where all men have an equal chance, and no one must rely on the justness of his cause, or the blamelessness of his life, or any such natural advantage which he may possess over his fellows. The wealthiest and most respected man of the district will often be one who dates his prosperity from a suit which, as every one is well aware, was brought to a successful termination by unlimited perjury, and a document discovered at the bottom of a chest in the zenana just in time to be produced in court. His neighbours speak of him as the society of an English provincial town speak of a man who began life behind a counter, and ends it in the parlour of a county bank, whither he had pushed his way by dint of prudence and frugality." *

* "The Competition Wallah," p. 227.

To lose a suit is not only annoying and expensive, it is disgraceful; hence all means of damaging an opponent are freely resorted to. "A planter confessed to a friend of mine that he had been reduced to the verge of ruin by a Rājā, who trumped up three actions in succession, and gained them all. The Englishman, however, won back the ground which he had lost in a suit, the facts of which had been invented and arranged by his agent and Zemindar." *

A friend of my own told me that, when living in Cachar, a man complained to him that a Sirdar on the estate had burned some of his charcoal. On asking how he knew this, the reply was, "Bholonātha saw him do it." On being questioned, Bholonātha denied all knowledge of it; but when the complainant pressed him to repeat what he had told him, the man said, "Why did you not tell me that you wished me to give evidence?"

It is very common for a charge to be brought against a man altogether out of proportion to the offence given. If a blow is struck, it is magnified into an attempt at murder; if a debt is incurred, the amount demanded is double or treble what is legally owing. Sometimes a man, out of revenge for a real or supposed wrong, will bring a charge against another whom he knows to be absolutely innocent of what he tries his best to prove. Men inflict severe wounds upon themselves, that they may lay a charge of assault against an enemy; corpses have been hacked, that a charge of murder might be brought against one they wished to injure; people have been killed, and their dead bodies placed in a position to lead the police authorities to believe that the person against whom the conspiracy was formed had been guilty of their death. Magistrates frequently decide cases

* "The Competition Wallah," p. 227.

against the verbal evidence tendered in court, because they know that both sides have trained witnesses ; they judge according to probability. Judges have declared that they did not believe a case had come before them, in which the natives of India were concerned, which was not supported by perjury. Barristers, seeing the way in which the evidence is dovetailed, to make the story of their client appear true, have sometimes to throw discredit on their own witnesses, lest the art of their solicitors in training the witnesses should be too apparent. The litigant goes into court expecting the judge to discount the charges made. He therefore makes them sufficiently large to allow, when the discount is taken off, to secure all he ought to get ; whilst the defendant, not content with simply disproving the charges, has witnesses to prove a great deal more than the truth. It is a notorious fact that there are many in the neighbourhood of the law courts ready to give evidence on any subject, and on either side, for a mere trifle. The task of hearing false evidence in the courts, and of judging which side is the more likely to be in the right, must be a painful and irksome task. Added to this is the belief that judges are open to bribery. Men who have access to a magistrate or judge will not scruple to take money privately from litigants who are foolish enough to believe that they are aiding their cause by this waste of money.

As illustrations of what has been said, the following may be given. "A shopkeeper complained in court that, as he was walking across the street, one of his neighbours knocked him down with a cudgel, and, as he lay insensible, robbed him of thirteen rupees. He produced seven witnesses who confirmed substantially the whole statement. It eventually turned out that the prisoner struck the prosecutor on the back with a slight

switch, and that the rupees and the insensibility were an episode which had no foundation in fact." *

"A young man bought a village from a Zemindar, who sold it cheap because the inhabitants had for some time refused to pay any rent. As the new proprietor was well aware that his tenants were likely to prove unruly, he went with a strong force to compel them. At that time cholera was rife in the village, and during the night the headman came, with several of his companions, and declared that if the landlord did not clear off, he would bring a corpse, cut its throat, throw it in the Englishman's camp, and lay a charge of murder against him."

On another occasion this same planter happened to be visiting a brother planter. After dinner a jackal began to scream, when the host and another friend took up their rifles, and went to shoot it. Not finding the jackal, one of them fired at a sheep at a little distance, and when he fired he saw a man suddenly jump up from behind the sheep, and then fall down. On going to the spot it was discovered that the man was shot through the heart, and was quite dead. The relations of the deceased prosecuted the planter for murder, and swore that he had tied the deceased to a tree, beaten him cruelly, outraged him in a most foul manner, and finally put him out of his misery by deliberately firing at him from the distance of a few yards." †

In Agra a Thakur, having a quarrel with a shopkeeper, a servant of the great man suggested that his master should kill him, and charge the shopkeeper with the murder. The wife of the volunteer victim hearing of this, prevented her husband from sacrificing himself, so an idiot boy was murdered, and his body deposited in

* "The Competition Wallah," p. 229. † Ibid., p. 231.

the premises of the shopkeeper. But fortunately this ingenuity was not successful; the trick was discovered, and the penalty fell on the guilty parties.

Between perjury and forgery there is often only a single step. In order to make valid a claim or to resist oppression, to substantiate or disprove a charge, documentary evidence is sometimes necessary. And where this has never existed, or been destroyed, or lost, it is necessary to supply its place. As a result, it is no uncommon thing for revenue officers and judges, before whom these documents are placed, to reject them as palpable forgeries. Though forgery is not so common as perjury, because of the greater chances of detection, yet it is the opinion of those whose experience of our courts is greatest, that it is very frequently resorted to. In cases where leases are required to prove the claim of a landlord for rent it is an easy thing to manufacture them as, in the great majority of cases, the tenant is too ignorant to read or write. And it sometimes happens with forged documents as with trained witnesses, that the manufacture is too palpable, and a doubt is raised in the judge's mind which leads him to reject them. It is said that were all prosecuted for perjury and forgery who are certainly guilty of these crimes, our judges would have little else to do than to try them.

A result of the natural tendency to lying—which in special cases leads to perjury and forgery—is the want of confidence that the Hindus repose in each other, and in Englishmen with whom business may bring them into contact. If a workman agrees to execute any work, he will not commence it until he has received money in advance—professedly to purchase material—as a safeguard against his employer, who, if he did not require the article when it was completed,

might refuse to take it. In almost all business transactions a written agreement must be made on both sides, which must be stamped and registered, because a man's word is not considered binding. In connection with this may be mentioned the almost universal practice of bargaining. A man who has anything to sell, or a workman who may be called to undertake any work, never dreams of asking the proper price for his work; nor does any one, who has had any experience, think of giving what is asked. As in Solomon's time—"It is nought, nought," says the buyer, as goods are offered him for sale; whilst the seller, in his turn, will not scruple to speak falsely about the value of his articles, and the prices others have given him. Speaking of the lower classes, if not the middle and upper, a man goes away better pleased if, by dint of long chaffering, he has obtained a mere trifle over the proper price, than if he had received a higher one without the excitement of bargaining. In the one case he imagines that his sharpness has induced his customer to give more than he intended; but in the other, he thinks that the man has paid exorbitantly owing to his ignorance. There is always this feeling on the part of the purchaser—that he might have driven a better bargain; whilst the seller imagines that had he asked more, he might have got a proportionately higher price. Occasionally one meets with a man who asks a fair price, and sticks to it, but this is very exceptional.

There are few peoples subjected to greater oppression than the Hindus. The poor are passionately attached to the soil which has been cultivated by their forefathers. Owing to their great poverty they are unable to lay aside money to enable them to make a fresh start in another part of the country. They are conservative in

their habits, and with great difficulty would be able to adapt themselves to the food and the new methods of cultivation necessary in other districts. Born in a rice-producing country, the Bengalis would be scarcely able to live in the dryer regions where wheat is grown, nor would they know how to turn the soil to the best advantage. They have therefore to submit to cruel oppression. Bad as was the condition of the slave in the Southern States of America, the condition of multitudes of the poor people in Bengal is in some respects worse. The slave was sure of food, and of a decent house to live in, because it was the interest of his owner to feed and house him well. But it is otherwise with the poor of India. The cultivator has to pay a rent that is difficult to raise in fruitful seasons ; but when the rainfall is low, and his crops small, he has to accept loans, at exorbitant interest, from his landlord, and when once he becomes indebted it is almost impossible ever to free himself from the chains. The interest he is compelled to pay leaves little to support himself and family. In addition to the normal, fixed rent which his landlord has a legal right to demand, other exactions are made which reduce the tenants to abject poverty. Rich landlords, when an income tax was levied, did not scruple to force this from their miserable tenants, whose income was far below the minimum liable to taxation ; and in many cases they continued to demand it years after it had ceased to be levied. A marriage, or death, or any extraordinary expense that the landlords may incur, is a sufficient reason for demanding an extra sum from the tenants. The result is, these poor people are obliged to remain, though their hard work secures them a mere pittance, as much as if a serf law were in force. If they speak of their grievances, their cattle and

ploughs may be seized. They have nothing but what is pawned to the landlord, or to some money-lending go-between. There is widespread oppression, and the grinding poverty of the people forces itself into notice. Bengal, one of the richest soils on the earth, which, in many parts, is able to support a larger population than it has, is in such a condition that, if a single season's rains are withheld, unless help is given by the Government and charitably disposed people, it would be decimated by famine. The country produces sufficient in years of plenty to provide for its people in the years of scarcity; but as they live from hand to mouth, and cannot save anything for such contingencies, they are entirely dependent upon others when the rains fail.

Hindus are unforgiving. They do not quarrel, fight, shake hands, and become good friends again. Concerning what they term their honour they are very sensitive, and wait long for an opportunity to avenge themselves on those who have tarnished it. And, as they are naturally cowardly, their methods of revenge are subtle and secret. To strike a blow in the dark is far more in the way of a Hindu than boldly to accuse a man of wrong-doing and punish him for it. And where the offender himself is beyond the reach of direct attack, it is not beneath a Bengali's view to try to wound him through his children or other members of his family. Even though the offence may be apparently forgotten, if, months or even years after the quarrel, a favourable opportunity occurs of wreaking vengeance, it is eagerly seized. I have known charges to lie unmentioned for many years, and brought up when at last time has brought an opportunity of revenge; and I have known cases where, because of some wretched family squabble, means have been used to rob the

offender of his means of livelihood. When a Hindu's anger is excited, truth, honour, trust, are all forgotten, and no means left unemployed that can injure an enemy in character, purse, and position. The term "mild Hindu" is the purest sarcasm; they submit to oppression and cruelty because physically incapable of resistance, not from inherent mildness and readiness to forgive. Let the opportunity be given to avenge themselves, and they are very vindictive. They do not use the knife or the dagger, it is true, but they resort to poison, and, what is sometimes even worse, the poison of their own untruthful tongues.

There are those who say that there is no such thing as morality amongst the Hindus; this is an exaggerated statement. There is widespread immorality, but it is not universal. A Brāhman gentleman, writing in the *Calcutta Review*, says, "Sexual impurity is, it is true, scarcely considered a sin in the males."* I should say that in the villages purity of morals prevails generally. Men and women work hard in the fields or in the home, and, returning at dusk, seldom go out until the following day. There are few idlers to lead others astray, nor are there many opportunities of evil. Though occasionally cases of infidelity come to light there, I should say that the morals of the villagers and working classes would compare favourably with those of the same class elsewhere. In the villages many are left widows. These, if openly unchaste, have to migrate into the towns, because they are not allowed to live with the families they have disgraced. Abortion and infanticide are not confined to the larger towns, but are also rife in the villages.

But of the morality of the towns little can be said.

* Vol. ii. p. 23.

London is not a perfect city; but Calcutta, with a population of one-sixth of that of London, has nearly double the number of prostitutes. The Zenana system has much to do with this. A man marries, and his employment takes him to a distance from his family home. As he deems it unsafe to take his wife with him, she remains at her father's house, which he visits after intervals of months or years. In the majority of cases the men form other ties. Nearly all the servants in Calcutta and other cities are away from their families for two or three years at a time. The cruel treatment of widows drives many of them to a life of immorality. Concubinage is so common in Bengal that no one seems surprised at it. And yet those who do not regard conjugal infidelity in themselves as a crime are careful to prevent it in their wives. It is often boastfully said by Bengali gentlemen that they do not have recourse to the Divorce Court. This is not because of the purer lives of the gentlemen. Little can be said of the morality of a community in which concubinage is openly practised, prostitution common, and where abortion is carried on as a distinct profession. Continence is not taught. As soon as it is possible boys and girls marry.

What has so far been said applies to the general community; the peculiarities of the crimes of those who sink below the level and make themselves obnoxious to its penal laws may now claim attention for a little.

At the commencement of a work on Medical Jurisprudence, Dr. Chevers says: "It would probably be impossible to point to any races of men whose great crimes more distinctly emanate from their national character than is the case with those various classes of nations who inhabit the British possessions in India." In support of this statement the following quotations are made

from writers qualified to speak concerning two classes most opposed in national characteristics: Mackintosh, describing the warlike Rājputs of the North-West Provinces, says, "The Rājputs are the representatives of India. In them are seen all the qualities of the Hindu race unmitigated by foreign mixture, exerted with their original energy, and displayed in the strongest light. They exhibit the genuine form of a Hindu community formed of the most discordant materials, and combining the most extraordinary contrasts of moral nature; unconquerable adherence to native opinions and usages with servile submission to a foreign yoke; an unbelieving priesthood, ready to suffer martyrdom for the most petty observance of their professed faith; a superstition which inspires the resolution to inflict or to suffer the most atrocious barbarities without cultivating any natural sentiment or enforcing any social duty; . . . attachment to kindred and to home, with no friendship and no love of country; good temper and gentle disposition, little active cruelty except when stimulated by superstition; but little sensibility, little compassion, and scarcely any disposition to relieve suffering or retrieve wrong done to themselves or others; timidity, with its natural attendants, falsehood and meanness, in the ordinary relations of human life, joined with a capability of becoming excited, to courage in the field, to military enthusiasm, to heroic self-devotion; abstemiousness in some respects more rigorous than that of a Western hermit, in others a life of intoxication; austerities and self-tortures almost incredible, practised by those who otherwise wallow in gross sensuality, childish levity, barefaced falsehood, no faith, no constancy, no shame, no belief in the existence of justice."

Of the Bengalis, Macaulay, in his Essay on Warren Hastings, writes: "The physical organization of the Bengali is feeble even to effeminacy. . . . His pursuits are sedentary, his limbs delicate, his movements languid. During many ages he has been trampled on by men of bolder and more hardy breeds. Courage, independence, veracity, are qualities to which his constitution and his situation are equally unfavourable, . . . All those arts which are the natural defence of the weak are more familiar to this subtle race than to the Roman of the time of Juvenal, or to the Jew of the Dark Ages. What the horns are to the buffalo, what the paw is to the tiger, what the sting is to the bee, what beauty, according to the old Greek song, is to woman, deceit is to the Bengali. Large promises, smooth excuses, elaborate tissues of circumstantial falsehood, chicanery, perjury, forgery, are the weapons, offensive and defensive, of the people of the Lower Ganges. All these millions do not furnish one Sepoy to the armies of the Company. But as usurers, money-changers, as sharp legal practitioners, no class of human beings can bear a comparison with them. With all his softness, the Bengali is by no means placable in his enmities, or prone to pity. The pertinacity with which he adheres to his purposes yields only to the immediate pressure of fear. Nor does he lack a certain kind of courage which is often wanting in his masters. To inevitable evils he is sometimes found to oppose a passive fortitude such as the Stoics attributed to their ideal sage. An European warrior, who rushes on a battery of cannon with a loud hurrah, will sometimes shriek under the surgeon's knife, and fall into an agony of despair at the sentence of death. But the Bengali, who would see his country overrun, his house laid in ashes, his children murdered or dishonoured,

without having the spirit to strike one blow, has yet been known to endure torture with the firmness of Mucius, and to mount the scaffold with the steady step and even pulse of Algernon Sidney."

From these extracts describing two distinct races of Hindus, it will be seen how marked are the national characteristics; and as their natures differ, so do their crimes. A skilful detective, when a murder or any other great crime has been committed, is generally able, from the manner of its committal, to form a correct opinion concerning the nationality of the criminal.

Of the trials in our Courts of Justice, those for murder bulk largely; and of all the means resorted to by which obnoxious persons are got rid of, perhaps poison is the commonest, where the act is premeditated, and not the result of a sudden outburst of rage. There is far less likelihood of detection in the use of poison than of any other method. In India poisonous plants grow wild, whilst other drugs, such as arsensic, which produce symptoms very similar to those of cholera—a disease endemic in Bengal—are easily procurable in the bazaars. Preparations of opium and hemp, too, are in common use amongst the people. The burning of the bodies almost as soon as life is extinct, which prevents the examination that would follow a suspicious death in other countries, rather encourages this form of crime.

A common incentive to the use of poisonous drugs, where the object is the very opposite to that of murder, but which often causes it, is found in the superstitious character of the people, which leads them to believe that by administering certain potions they can gain or retain the affections of a husband or lover. In years not far back parents who feared their sons were favourably inclined to Christianity, rather than suffer the disgrace

of having one of their family an apostate from the religion of their fathers, have administered poisons which have permanently destroyed their sons' mental powers. Dr. Chevers quotes from an article on Witchcraft in the Central Provinces, in which the writer speaks of poisoning for the purpose of winning the affections of man or woman, as commonly practised there as late as 1866: "It is most practised here, as everywhere else, by jealous women, or desperate lovers of either sex, for the purpose of captivating affection, of infatuating and enthralling the object of desire. But it is also used for baneful purposes—to cause disease, death, or some strange aberration."

Poison was largely used by the Thugs, the professional murderers of India—men who regarded their deadly trade as religious service, as they sought the goddess Kāli's aid before setting out on an expedition, and paid a proportion of their ill-gotten gains to her temple on their return; and who further imagined that they were doing what must be pleasing to her in taking away the lives of their victims. These men generally went out in gangs of not less than three. The more common method of killing their prey was by means of a cloth drawn tightly round the neck, not unlike the practice of garotting which was common in England a few years back. The bodies were usually buried in loose sand near the roadside, cast into wells, or, with stones round their necks, thrown into the rivers. These men carried on their dreadful work on the roadside, or in the boats and ferries by which the rivers were crossed or traversed.

The crime of procuring abortion is one of the commonest in India. On this delicate subject Dr. Chevers says: "In a country like India, where true morality is almost unknown, but where the laws of society exercise

the most rigorous and vigilant control imaginable over the conduct of females, and where six-sevenths of the widows, whatever their age or position in life may be, are absolutely debarred from re-marriage, and are compelled to rely upon the uncertain support of relatives, it is scarcely surprising that great crimes should frequently be practised to conceal the results of immorality, and that the procuring of criminal abortion should be an act of almost daily commission, and should have become a trade among certain of the lower midwives.

"Ward described the crime of destroying illegitimate children in the womb as prevalent to a shocking degree in Bengal. In the family of a single Kulin Brāhman, whose daughters never lived with their husbands, it was common for each daughter to destroy a child in the womb annually; this crime he found to be very prevalent among widows. The pundit who gave him this information supposed that 10,000 children were thus murdered in the province of Bengal every month. When Mr. Ward expressed his doubts of this extraordinary and shocking circumstance, the pundit appealed to the fact of the many females being tried for this offence in the Courts of Justice in every zillah of Bengal. He said the fact was so notorious that every child in the country knew of it, and that the crime had acquired an appropriate name. It was a fact, too, he was assured, that many women died after taking drugs intended to destroy the child. A Kulin Brāhman assured him that he had heard more than fifty women, daughters of Kulins, confess these murders. . . . On making further inquiry into this subject, a friend, upon whose authority he could implicitly rely, assured him that a very respectable and learned Brāhman, who certainly was not willing to charge his countrymen

with more vices than they possessed, told him it was supposed that a thousand of these abortions took place in Calcutta every month."

In the Police Reports are numerous cases where death has resulted to the mother from the use of drugs and other means for effecting this purpose, so that there can be no doubt about the crime being a common one. In many cases it would be considered a far less evil for the mother to die than for it to be known that she had been guilty of immorality. The culprits in the large majority of cases are widows, though it is believed—and that not without some authority—that in districts where infanticide is common amongst those who are not widows, as in Rajpootana, and strenuous efforts are made to put a stop to it, astrologers profess to be able to say whether the child *in utero* is a male or female; if a female, measures are resorted to to procure abortion.

"The murder of female children, whether by the direct employment of homicidal means, or by the more inhuman and not less certain measures of exposure to privation and neglect, has for ages been the chief and most characteristic crime of six-sevenths of the inhabitants of British India. Throughout Central India, and especially in Rajpootana, in Cutch Bhooj, in the province of Agra, and in Khurdisthan, the destruction of female children has prevailed in historic times. Bengal Proper, or the Delta of the Ganges, appears now to be comparatively free from this scourge; but the Bengalis were only prevented by a stringent law from thinning their surplus population by throwing their children to the alligators at the mouths of the Ganges. It has lately been suggested in a native paper, that in Kulin families female children are systematically neglected, and that few grow up. Polyandry still obtains among

the Kasias—hill people near Sylhet. Wherever this custom prevails, it points demonstratively to the practice of female infanticide. Beyond all this, the wilful neglect of female children operates destructively in every town and village throughout the length and breadth of India. By the Hindu, the advent of a female child is superstitiously regarded as a curse, and is practically regarded as a misfortune. The daughter —so welcome in the English peasant's homestead, so fondly greeted as the crowning honour and presiding grace of every European family of gentle blood—is viewed by the Hindusthani Rayat and the Rajpoot Thakur as a certain presage either of poverty or of shame hereafter. The daughter of a Hindu must always be dependent upon others for her support. She must be suitably married, and a crime will be involved in the postponement of her nuptials beyond the age of childhood. At her husband's death she must trust wholly to the support of others, and her conduct must be watched with unceasing vigilance, lest shame, with all its direst accompaniments—feud, revenge, and murder—should be entailed upon her house."* Manu's *law* on this subject is this: "He who takes to wife a damsel of full age shall not give a nuptial present to her father, since the father lost his dominion over her by detaining her at a time when she might have been a parent." Numerous cases might be cited where fathers have murdered their daughters, and brothers have destroyed their sisters who have yielded to temptation, when it has happened that, owing to poverty and other causes, a husband could not be found for them, or they have been left widows.

To what extent the practice of female infanticide is

* "Medical Jurisprudence," p. 750.

practised may be inferred from the following facts: "It is clearly established that in every country in Europe there is an excess of females. The census of 1851 showed that throughout Great Britain and Ireland the number of males then amounted to only 48·2 of the inhabitants. The first census of the North-West Provinces of India, in 1863, gave 53·4 as the percentage of males in a population of 30,271,885; whilst the official census of Mysore, for 1852, showed that in a population of 3,410,382, the number of adult males exceeded that of females by nearly 10 per cent., while the excess of female infants was 16 per cent.!"* From the Report on the above census it appears that "in the Thakur caste, 52,763 strong, there was a total of 10,695 male, and of only 5865 female children. . . . Out of every thousand of the Thakoor population, there are at least forty-two girls below the age of twelve missing." †

In 1856 an officer was appointed to investigate the facts of this custom in Northern India. He states that of the villages visited by him, in 26 out of 308 not a single girl under six years of age existed. In another batch of 38 villages he did not find a single girl; marriages were very rare there, and in some places were not known to have taken place within the recollection of the present generation. In another instance there was not a girl over six, and no marriage had taken place there for over eighty years. In many parts of the Benares division he also found that marriages had not taken place within the memory of the present generation. Other officers in other districts had a similar experience.

"Among the Rājputs it appears to be customary to destroy the infant immediately upon its birth; the

* "Medical Jurisprudence," p. 752.

† Ibid., p. 752.

mothers simply starved them to death." In other cases they were poisoned with the juice of the mudar plant, tobacco, or dhatura; or the child was strangled immediately it was born. In Benares it was a common practice to drown them in milk after a prayer had been offered that they might come again in the form of sons; whilst in other places, again, the newly-born infant was buried alive, or left exposed in the jungle.

Strong measures have been resorted to by the Government with some measure of success; but there is every reason to believe that in many places the practice still prevails. The plan relied on to check the evil was to reduce the expenditure at weddings, and thus save the unfortunate father of a girl from being compelled to spend immense sums of money in feasting and making presents. That these people do not differ much from those of other lands in the proportion of the sexes, may be shown from the following fact: "The village of Raipoor, in the Umritsur district, had become so notorious for the commission of this crime, that in September, 1867, there were only eight girls to one hundred boys. A police force was quartered upon them for two years, and in the next year thirteen girls, of whom ten are alive, were born to nine boys." *

In addition to the above-mentioned crime is the exposure of children who are supposed to be possessed by a demon: and in other cases, where an illegitimate child is placed at the door of its reputed father that he may be induced to provide for it and its mother. If a child refused the breast, it was supposed to be possessed by a devil, and exposed in a basket tied to the branches of a tree for three days. If it survived the test, which was a rare occurrence, it was taken back to its mother, its

* "Medical Jurisprudence," p. 759.

death being taken as a confirmation of the suspicion about its possession. The great Hindu reformer Chaitanya was thus exposed, and would probably have died had not a Brāhman happened to pass at the time, who asserted that the infant was an incarnation of Vishnu.

Another crime should be mentioned that is almost peculiar to India: the employment of professional beaters, or latials, as they are called. Two schoolboys quarrel, call each other the foulest names, and when we should expect to see them fight and become friends, one of them will engage a number of stalwart men to waylay the offender and give him a thrashing. In the villages it is a common practice if a small ryot refuse to pay his rent, or in any way offend his landlord : or if a quarrel arise between him and some neighbour, for a number of these ruffians to be hired, who set fire to his house to drive him out, and then beat him. This plan of setting fire to a house, and, in the excitement, robbing its owner, is very common, and has earned a special name, dacoity.

But there is a brighter and more attractive side of Hindu morality. If there are conspicuous vices, there are also conspicuous virtues common amongst them. Residents in cities who have to do mainly with the lower orders, and perhaps the worst class of those, regard the Hindus as idle; but this is not their general character. In the country the men commence their work as soon as it is light, and continue in the fields ploughing, sowing, weeding, transplanting, reaping, according to the season, until about eleven o'clock; they then return home, feed their cattle, bathe, take their first meal, and lie down to rest. About two o'clock they resume work, and continue until dusk. On one or two days a week they trudge to the nearest village

market, carrying their produce for sale, and returning with a load of necessaries for the week. This hard life continues the whole year round, with little to vary its monotony. Perhaps three or four times in the year there may be a religious festival, which they visit to listen to the music, to see the performances, and to purchase commodities, which are brought there from the cities, as the English peasantry used to frequent the fairs. They have no regular weekly day of rest, but are as active on Sundays as on other days. The workmen in towns toil from early dawn until near midnight. There are idlers to be found, but, taken as a whole, they work as hard and for longer hours than the British workman. Indoors the women are not less industrious. They have their children to care for, the house to keep clean, fuel to collect, food to cook, and all the ordinary duties of the home. The middle and upper classes have the household duties attended to by servants as in England, but a great deal is done by the ladies of the house. Those who have had to do with schools and colleges seldom complain of the idleness of the students. When it is remembered that the students receive the whole of their instruction in English, to them a foreign language, the high position taken in University examinations shows that they must work harder than their English competitors. A visit to a Hindu home or lodging-house for students, late at night, or in the early morning, would dispel the idea that they are idle.

Though passionately fond of his children, a man will see his child die and perform the funeral ceremonies with a calm and stolid countenance. He will suffer intense agony, or submit to painful operations, and never a sound escape his lips. He will make long, wearisome, and dangerous journeys, suffering great

discomfort from want of food and proper accommodation, and never murmur. The patience of the Hindu is most praiseworthy. The secret of it lies, perhaps, in the conviction that his life is but the working out of a Divine plan that was formed at, or soon after his birth, and that it is useless, as it is wrong, to resist the inevitable. Still, whatever be the cause, the fact remains that, for patient endurance of physical pain and of the ordinary sorrows of life, there are few to equal, none to surpass them. It is not that they do not feel; but they believe that whatever comes is their fate, and must be patiently endured. A characteristic story is told of two brothers who were caught stealing horses from a regiment on the march. Before sentence was executed one of them suggested that his brother should be sent for the missing horses, and he would answer for his return with his life. As the horses were urgently needed, the plan was adopted; but neither man nor horses returned within the appointed time, and the one who remained as a hostage was surprised that any one expected them. For saving his brother from punishment, and for enriching his friends with the money for which the horses were sold, he was quite prepared to suffer death.

The wish of a father is law to his family, though his sons may be greyheaded. Many educated young men in Bengal would have embraced Christianity if it were not for the profound respect they have for father and mother, and the grief the open avowal of their faith in Christ would cause them. Long after a man is of age, and when, according to Western notions, he might be allowed to think and act for himself, the force of his filial ties holds him back from a course that may appear to him desirable. The fact that after his marriage he

continues to dwell in the family house, fosters this filial respect; but even where he has a home of his own it is almost as great as in other cases.

The charity of the Hindus, as seen in almsgiving, is great. There is no poor law in India, no workhouses, excepting for the Europeans in the Presidency towns. The poor, the halt, the lame, the blind, the weak, the insane, are provided for by their own family, if it is able to do it; in cases where there are few or no relatives, the burden is taken up by others. It is a "work of merit;" just as making a tank, planting trees by the road-side, or constructing a bathing-place on the banks of a sacred stream. It is no uncommon thing for a man, though not at all wealthy, to have a number of pensioners almost, if not entirely, dependent upon him. In a large family some members are less successful than others; but, as the earnings of all form a common fund, all are equally provided for. Occasionally it happens that an idle, spendthrift son wears out the patience and strains the generosity of his family until he is told to leave the home or work; but, as a rule, the poor and the helpless are provided for. There are millions of professional beggars in India; the shrines are crowded with them, and people who are themselves poor, give freely. It may be said that this is a form of barter; that presents are made to the saints to win credit in heaven. Were the same test applied to the gifts of Christians, would all the apparent charity be found real? Are gifts to the poor and needy always and only an expression of love to the Saviour and to the recipients?

Another most pleasing trait is the love of parents to their children, and the long-continued sacrifice they make to further their advancement in life. The

Bengalis have a proverb referring to the way in which a man should dispose of his income. He should divide it into four parts: one part goes to pay off old debts; one to God; one is for present expenses; and one is put into the bank. The interpretation is as follows: one part should be given to parents in return for their kindness and self-denial in the past; one part should be given to God for the support of religion; a third part should be devoted to the ordinary expenses of the family; whilst a fourth should be spent on the education of their children, that they may be able to support them when old-age comes. This is a more pleasing proverb than the one which teaches that the "old hen may scratch for her chickens; but the chickens never scratch for the old hen." So far as my observation has gone, the spirit of this proverb is manifest in the ordinary life of the Bengalis. Parents are not suffered to want as long as sons can support them. It would be regarded as disgraceful for a man able to provide for an aged father or mother, were he to allow them to depend on strangers. In gifts to the poor the Hindus are not lacking; nor do they come behind those of any country in self-denial, in order that their sons may succeed in life.

WOMAN.

# CHAPTER I.

## THE POSITION OF WOMAN, AS TAUGHT IN THE SĀSTRAS.*

IT may appear strange in a work on the Hindu Religion to treat specially of the position of woman. In Christian countries, where she is the equal of man, this would not be required. But in India, where very different conditions prevail, which have the sanction of the Hindu sacred writings, it is necessary to do so.

It is commonly asserted by Hindus, that the practice of immuring their wives in prison-like apartments, arose through fear of their Mussulmān conquerors; that under the rule of Mohamedan princes, their persons not being safe, this system came into fashion. They admit that even before that time they may not have had the perfect liberty that their sisters in England enjoy; but, at the same time, they were not kept in the seclusion they are to-day. This may to some extent be true. But in the teaching of Manu, whose work was compiled about 900 B.C., the origin of this system is found. The Mussulmān invasion was not the main cause of the want of confidence in woman's honour. It may be that it put the crown on the arch which was already waiting, and tightened the chains in which woman was already held.

* *Calcutta Review*, vol. xxxvi. p. 315.

In some respects the women of Greece and Rome were treated as they are at the present time in India. In a speech delivered by an Athenian on his trial for the murder of his wife's seducer, we gain an insight into the customs that prevailed in Athens. He assures the judge that whilst he treated her kindly, he did not allow her to be master of his fortune, nor of her own actions. After she became a mother, he placed more confidence in her, and allowed her to go out of his house, unattended by himself, to be present at the funeral ceremonies of her mother-in-law. And it was on that occasion that she was seen by her seducer, and induced to listen to his proposals. Browne, in his work on their Civil Law, says of the Romans that "wives were dismissed not only for want of chastity, or for being of intolerable temper, but for the slightest causes," and further, that "they were never considered to have attained the age of reason and experience, but were condemned to the perpetual tutelage of parents, husband, and guardians." This passage might have been taken from Manu.

According to the Dharma Sāstra, generally accepted as a divinely inspired book, "By a girl, or by a young woman, or by a woman advanced in years, nothing must be done, even in her own dwelling-place, according to her mere pleasure. In childhood must a female be dependent on her father, in youth on her husband, her lord being dead, on her sons. A woman must never seek independence." * The commentators add a few words to provide for contingencies: "If she have no sons she must be dependent on and subject to the near kinsmen of her husband; if he have left no kinsmen, on those of her father; or, if she have no paternal kinsmen, on the sovereign."

* "Dharma Sāstra," chap. v. pp. 162, 163.

This legislation is thoroughly one-sided. Though the husband be cruel, and untrue to his wife, this does not free her from her obligations to him. "Though unobservant of approved usages, or enamoured of another woman, or devoid of good qualities, yet a husband must constantly be revered as a god by a virtuous wife." * The result of such teaching is that when a husband is unfaithful, there is no redress for the injured wife. She cannot obtain a divorce; were such a course possible, she would be treated as a widow.

The wife, according to the same authority, is forbidden the comfort of approaching the gods in her own name. "No sacrifice is allowed to women apart from their husbands, no religious rite, no fasting. As far only as a wife honours her husband, so far she is exalted in heaven. A faithful wife who wishes to attain in heaven the mansion of her husband must do nothing unkind to him, be he living or dead." † Of course women visit the shrines, but it is only in their husband's name they can approach the gods. It is further declared that "women have no concern with the Vedas. This is lawfully settled. Having, therefore, no evidence of law, and no knowledge of expiatory texts, sinful women must be as foul as falsehood itself." In perfect accord with this is the teaching of some sects that women cannot obtain final emancipation, the highest bliss of heaven, until in later lives they have been born as men.

The bond uniting a woman to her husband is indissoluble even by death. "Let her (a widow) emaciate her body by living voluntarily on pure flowers, roots, and fruit; but let her not, when her lord is deceased, even pronounce the name of another man. Let her continue until death, forgiving injuries, performing harsh

* Chap. v. p. 154. † Chap. v. pp. 155, 156.

duties, avoiding sensual pleasure, and cheerfully practising the incomparable rules of virtue which have been followed by such women as were devoted to only one husband." "A widow who, from a wish to bear children, slights her deceased husband by marrying again, brings disgrace on herself here below, and shall be excluded from the seat of her lord. She who neglects her former husband, though of a lower class, and takes another of a higher, becomes despicable in this world." Learned pundits having affirmed that the re-marriage of widows was not forbidden in the sacred books, the Government of India passed a law legalizing it. But the sentiment of the people is so strongly opposed to it that few have availed themselves of the Act, and those who have done so have been outcasted. But how different the case with man! "Having kindled sacred fires and performed funeral rites for his wife who died before him, he may marry again, and again light the nuptial fire." * And it is no uncommon thing for a widower to do so a few weeks after the death of his former one. There is, however, this fact to be remembered, that his new wife being but a child, it may be necessary for him to live alone for years before she is old enough to join him.

The position assigned to the wife is one of entire subjection, and, in order to ensure this, "a *wife*, a son, a servant, a pupil, and a younger brother, may be corrected, when they commit faults, with a rope or a small shoot of a cane." This is generally accepted as right. A servant in my employ married a second wife, and expected the older one not only to earn her own living, but to give her wages to him, that he might maintain the younger one in comparative idleness. Occasionally she resented this, and was thrashed for her contumacy. On one occasion,

* Bk. v. p. 157, ff.

when her husband was more violent than usual, she agreed to go before a magistrate, to obtain legal protection against him. On the following day, when I suggested that we should go to the court, she affected surprise, and gave what appeared to her a sufficient reason for enduring his cruel treatment, as she said, "He is my husband, cannot he do what he likes with me?"

Concerning the moral nature of woman, Manu speaks in no measured terms, and his opinion is endorsed by other writers. "It is the nature of women in this world to cause men to sin." "A female is able to draw from the right path, not a fool only, but even a sage, and can lead him in subjection to desire or to wrath." It is this low opinion of woman that is the cause of the greater part of his legislation concerning her.

Although the wife must honour her husband as a god, and remain a widow after his death, the husband, seven years after marriage, if there be no son, may supersede her by another wife. This lawgiver goes even farther: "A wife who speaks unkindly may be put aside without delay. . . . If a wife drinks, shows hatred to her lord, is mischievous, or wastes his property, she may at all times be superseded by another wife."

The quotations given above are from Manu's "Dharma Sāstra." The following will show the position he occupies as a lawgiver amongst Hindus of all classes. "Of Manu's antiquity and reality there can be no doubt. . . . It is clear that the code was compiled by a Brāhman well versed in the lore of the Vedas, and to a certain extent in the ways of the world, thus combining secular and book knowledge at once. Nor, again, is there any doubt as to Manu's being the main fountain whence the religious observances of a country where every custom

is based on religion, the hopes and the fears of the Hindu in this life and in the next, the various regulations of society and intercourse, marriage and inheritance, birth-rights and funeral pyres, spring and are perpetuated. This is indeed the Sāstra to which learned and unlearned alike appeal. The well-read pundit, when we ask of him the reason for this or that custom, will base his answer on a text from Manu. The secular Hindu, nay, the unlettered ryot, while pleading in extenuation of some grave folly sanctioned by the transmission of ages, unconsciously repeats the substance of some time-honoured sloke. But most Hindus, if asked the age and date of their great legislator, would answer in a breath that he was the son of the 'self-existent,' that he was taught his laws by Brahmā in one hundred thousand verses, and that finally he gave them in an abridged form to his son Bhrigu, who gave them currency to the world." "It covers nearly all varieties of human life. It gives laws to kings and councils, to pleaders and clients, to the husbandman in the field and the mahājan on the ship; and it lays down the law which is to regulate man in every relationship of life into which he can enter. And in many respects its laws are as thoroughly acknowledged by the mass of the Hindus to-day as when the code was originally drawn up. And not only does the system deal with overt acts, but is as careful to regulate and dilate upon the thoughts and desires of men which could hardly be referred to in the secrets of the confessional. It is a strange mixture, for there, in startling relief, contrasting as the vivid lightning on the black thunder cloud, will be seen in perhaps one and the same page puerilities of thought joined with masculine vigour of mind; Baconian profundity and bold truisms; the manners of Confucius

or of Socrates with those of the most Jesuitical dishonesty; Draco's sternness and patriarchal simplicity; the politeness of Chesterfield and the rampant pride of Brāhmanical domination; wise saws straight as a sunbeam, and casuistry tortuous and at variance with itself; sensible views of natural history, and vague and childish solutions of the most common phenomena; truth and falsehood; darkness and light; and much that is noble and admirable in morals, with all that is vile and degraded of superstitions." He wrote at times as though men were good; at other times he sanctions certain evils, as though he saw that there was no reasonable hope of their being prevented; *e.g.* "he legalizes abduction, and makes it one of the eight forms of marriage."

A few sentences will now be given from a code of laws drawn up by order of the Government of India for the guidance of judicial officers. The Hindus are judged according to their own laws and customs—hence the necessity for some authority. It will be seen that the spirit, and almost the words of Manu, reappear in this modern code.

"A man both day and night must keep his wife so much in subjection that she by no means be mistress of her own actions. If the wife have her own free will, notwithstanding she be sprung from a superior caste, she will behave amiss. A woman is not to be relied on."

"A woman who always abuses her husband shall be treated with good advice for a year; if she does not amend with one year's advice, he shall no longer hold any communication with her, nor keep her any longer near him, but shall provide her with food and clothes. A woman who dissipates or spoils her own property,

. . . is always quarrelling, or who eats before her husband eats, such woman shall be turned out of the house."

"A woman shall never go out of the house without the consent of her husband; . . . shall never hold discourse with a strange man; . . . shall not laugh without drawing her veil over her face; shall pay a proper respect to the Deity, her husband's father, her spiritual guide, and the guests, and shall not eat until she has served them with victuals. A woman shall never go to a stranger's house, shall not stand at the door, and must never look out of a window."

"It is proper for a woman, after her husband's death, to burn herself in the fire with his corpse; every woman who thus burns herself shall remain in Paradise with her husband 35,000,000 years by destiny. If she cannot burn, she must in that case preserve an inviolable chastity; if she remains chaste, she goes to Paradise; and if she does not, she goes to hell. Confidence must not be placed in woman." "If one trust a woman, without doubt he must wander about the streets as a beggar." *

In harmony with the spirit of these laws are well-known proverbs. "Blind sons support their parents, but a prince's daughters extract money from them;" *i.e.* sons, however helpless, will prove helpful to their parents, whilst daughters will be a source of expense and trouble. "Unless a daughter dies, she cannot be praised for her virtue;" *i.e.* women are frail; however pure their lives may have been, there is no certainty that they will continue so.

It is true that in some passages Manu speaks a little more kindly than in the texts quoted above. He says

* "Code of Hindu Laws," 1776, pp. 285, 286.

"good women, eminently fortunate and worthy of reverence, irradiate the houses of their lords, and between them and Lakshmi, the goddess of abundance, there is no diversity whatever." In another passage he declares that, "Where females are honoured the deities are pleased, and where they are dishonoured religion becomes useless." But this is so utterly opposed to his general teaching that a writer says, "as Manu's 'Institutes' were evidently a compilation, had there been new and revised editions of his work, these gallant expressions would have been eliminated."

Before Manu's day a very different state of affairs existed. In Vedic times woman was regarded more as her husband's companion, was treated with greater confidence and respect, and was permitted to join him in the public religious festivals. "The original normal Vedic idea of religious worship appears to have been that it should be performed by a married couple, the husband officiating and his wife assisting. The normal household had one husband and one wife on a level of equality at the hearth, which was the altar of sacrifice. The wife had charge of the sacred vessels, prepared the sacrifice, and even sometimes composed the hymn." But even in the Vedic hymns, whilst sons are prayed for, and blessings implored on their behalf, daughters are not asked for, nor is intercession made for them. In one passage the inferiority of woman is implied as "the highest praise which the Rishi Syavaswa could give to a queen, his greatest benefactor, who had not only treated him with reverence, but had given him a herd of cattle, and costly ornaments, and put him in the way of obtaining the woman on whom he had set his heart. 'Sasiyasi, *though a female*, is more excellent than a man who reverences not the gods, nor bestows

wealth,' on the principle that a living dog is better than a dead lion." * Several of the hymns show that the old Aryans had not the highest opinion of woman's purity and virtue.

In the Epic Poems, scenes are described quite at variance with the prevailing custom of secluding women. The Mahābhārata has stories of Swayambaras, *i.e.* festivals at which princesses selected their husbands from a host of admirers, reminding one of the tournaments of the Western world. Meetings were held to which neighbouring princes were invited, the prize for excellence in archery being the hand of the fair princess, who was permitted to see, and be seen by others.

* "The Vedic Religion," p. 165.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE PRESENT POSITION OF WOMAN.

It should be understood that this account refers to the women of the middle and upper classes in North India. The poorer people would, if it were possible, seclude their wives, but the style of house, or rather hut, in which they live, and the fact that it is necessary for them to go to the markets, draw water, and attend to the duties of the house, make seclusion impossible. Some household servants are as scrupulous in keeping their wives hidden from the public gaze as men of large incomes. It is not because the husbands of the poorer classes are more trustful, but simply that circumstances are against their carrying out their wishes.

The degradation of women commences from their birth. Whilst every Hindu wife is most anxious to have sons, daughters are seldom prayed for, nor is their advent welcomed. Reasons of a secular nature may exist for this universal desire, but it is the religious one, that a son is required to perform the funeral rites of his parents and remoter ancestors, that has the greatest influence. Unless these are properly performed, a father's good works go for nothing; he must suffer in hell until some one releases him. Manu teaches, in the extravagant way common to Hindu writers, the immense benefits sons can confer on their families. A son of

Brāhmans who were married according to the Brahmā form of marriage (*i.e.* where the wife was given and accepted without gifts on behalf of either party), "redeems from sin, if he performs virtuous acts, ten ancestors, ten descendants, and himself the twenty-first person." A son born after marriage, according to the Daivya rite (*i.e.* where a daughter, gaily dressed and laden with ornaments, is bestowed upon an officiating priest), can in like manner "redeem seven and seven in higher and lower degrees. Sons of marriages, according to the Prajāpatya rite, six; and those according to the Arsha rite, three ancestors and three descendants." It is interesting to see how the doctrine of Purgatory, which makes the deliverance of the souls of the departed depend upon the offerings of their living friends, has its counterpart, perhaps its origin, in Hinduism. I once heard a priest in a Catholic Church exhorting his people to arrange for masses for the souls of their friends based upon arguments that Hindus might have used.

Hindu wives not blessed with sons give costly presents to the deities, undertake journeys to shrines, where the boon of sons is promised to those who visit them, endure severe fasts, and incur great expense to obtain them. Nor is this to be wondered at. In addition to the negative evil of having no son to comfort and support them, there is the positive evil that she may have to give up her position in her home to another wife. In the names of many Hindus, a history is suggested similar to that of Samuel—"asked of the Lord." Kāli Prasanna, Durgā Prasanna, etc., indicate that in the belief of the parents it was "by the favour" of the deities after whom the child was named that it was given. Probably a vow had been made, that on

the birth of a son an offering would be given at their shrine.

But whilst there is this great desire for sons, daughters are seldom prayed for. When a son is born there is great rejoicing, and friends offer their congratulations; but on the birth of a daughter no sounds of gladness are heard in the house, and friends offer consolation. "The Bengali Kulin Brāhman sees in a daughter a bitter well-spring of anxiety, expense, and possible humiliation; for she must probably marry a man who already has many wives, most of whom he seldom sees; she must live as a burden in her father's house, and be exposed to manifold trials and temptations through the absence of her husband." And what is true of the Kulin Brāhman is true of the ordinary Hindu, in a less degree. The girl must be married before she is twelve or thirteen years of age. To provide a husband necessitates the expenditure of the savings of years, or debts are contracted which can never be paid.

In the religious ceremonies pertaining to the birth of children there is a marked difference in the treatment of boys and girls. In order that the boy may be protected during the days of infancy and childhood, Sasthi, the special protectress of mothers and children, is invoked on his behalf. On the fifth night after a boy's birth the father is careful to place in the room, where the helpless babe is lying, pen and ink, flowers and fruits, so that the Creator may write on his forehead a favourable and prosperous history. In the case of girls this religious work is omitted.

Boys are early sent to school, but, as a rule, girls spend their time in play; and, whilst boys are initiated by a guru into the mysteries of Hinduism, and are taught to perform various ceremonies, a girl's religious exercises are

confined to those which have as their object the securing of a husband, and that he may live long.* They are the following:—

Siva Puja, or the worship of Siva. The object of this ceremony is that she may obtain a husband, like Siva. In a fit of anger, Parvati, the wife of the great god, killed herself. When she was born again as Durgā, she was anxious to be re-united to her husband; but as he had just commenced a life of penance, there seemed little chance of obtaining her heart's desire. However, she commenced her worship in front of him, and Kāmadeva (the Indian cupid) promised to assist her. After a time, Siva raised his head, when Kāma let fly his arrow, and the god, seeing Durgā, became enamoured of her. But why girls are taught to wish for a husband, like Siva, it is difficult to say. The Purānas teach that he was unfaithful to his wife, and the accounts of the quarrels of Siva and Durgā are anything but edifying reading. The ceremony is as follows:—"The Hindu girl is required to make two little earthen images of this god, and, placing them on the rind of a bel-fruit with leaves, begins his worship. Before doing so, she is enjoined to wash herself and change her clothes. . . . Sprinkling a few drops of holy water, she repeats the following words: 'All homage to Siva. . . . All homage to Bajjara' (meaning by this two small earthen balls like peas, which are stuck on the body of the image). She is then to become absorbed in meditation about the form and attributes of the god, and afterwards she says her prayers three times in connection with Siva's several names. Offerings of flowers and bel leaves are then presented to the god with an incantation (mantra). Being pleased, Siva is supposed to ask from heaven

* "The Hindus as they are," p. 35.

what religious ceremony Gauri (Durgā) is performing. Gauri replies that she is worshipping Siva that she may get him for a husband."

Krishna Puja, or the worship of Krishna. The object of this act of devotion is practically the same; the burden of the child's prayer is as follows:—'May the prince of the kingdom be my husband; may I be beautiful and virtuous, and be the mother of seven wise and virtuous sons and two handsome daughters.* She also asks that her daughters-in-law may be industrious and obedient; that her sons-in-law may shine in the world by their good qualities; that her granary and farmyard may be always full; . . . that those near and dear to her may enjoy long life and prosperity; and that she may eventually, through the blessing of Krishna, die on the banks of the sacred Ganges, and thereby procure entrance into heaven.

"It is worthy of remark that even young Hindu girls, in the exercise of their immature discretion, make a distinction between the gods in the choice of a husband. In the Siva Puja a tender girl of five years of age is taught to prefer that god to Krishna for her husband, because the latter, according to the Hindu Sāstras, is reputed to have borne a questionable character. I once asked a girl why she would not have Krishna for her husband. She promptly answered that that god disported himself with thousands of gopinis (milkmaids), and was therefore not a *good* god, whilst Siva was devotedly attached to his one wife Durgā." In the Siva Puja the girl asks that Siva may be her husband, whilst in the Krishna Puja she asks the deity to provide her with one.

The worship of heroes. "This requires that the girl

* "The Hindus as they are," p. 36.

should paint on the floor ten pictures of deified men, as well as of gods, with rice paste. Offering them flowers and sandal-wood paste, she asks that she may have a father-in-law like Dasaratha, the father of Rāmachandra (one of the ten incarnations of Vishnu), a mother-in-law like Kausalya, his mother, a husband like Rāma himself, a husband's brother like Lakshmana, Rāma's younger brother; that she be a mother like Sasthi, whose children are all living; like Kunti, whose sons were renowned for their justice, piety, courage, and heroism; like the Ganges, which allays the thirst of all; like Mother Earth, whose patience is inexhaustible. And, to crown the whole, she prays that she may, like Durgā, be blessed with an affectionate and devoted husband; that, like Draupadi (the wife of the five Pandavas), she may be remarkable for her industry, devotion, and skill in the culinary art; and that she may be like Sita (Rāma's wife), whose chastity and attachment to her husband were worthy of all praise." It will be noticed that all these prayers are expressive of the desire for a husband and for those virtues which will enable a wife to retain his affections.

There are two other forms of worship which Hindu girls are taught to observe. The first is called the Sanjuti Vrata, and "is intended to ward off the thousand evils of polygamy. . . . To get rid of the consequences of this monstrous evil, a girl of five years is taught to offer her invocation to God, and in the outburst of her juvenile feeling is almost involuntarily led to indulge in curses and imprecations against her possible rival. . . . In performing this ceremony, she paints on the floor a variety of objects, such as the bough of a flower tree, a palanquin containing a man and a woman, with the sun and moon over it, the Ganges and Jumna with boats on

them, a temple of Siva, etc. She then invokes Siva and asks for his blessing. An elderly lady, more experienced in domestic matters, dictates, and the girl repeats after her a volley of abuse and curses against her *satin*, or rival wife. The following are a specimen: "May my *satin* become a slave; may she be exposed to infamy; may I devour her head; may she have spleen; may she die, and may I see her from the top of my house." *

The other rite is the worship of Yama, the god of the spirit world, who is supposed to wander with a noose in hand to seize, and a club to slay his victims, that his kingdom may not lack subjects. The object of this worship is that her husband may be long spared, and she be saved from the miseries of widowhood.

This is all the religious worship permitted to Hindu girls. Whilst living with their parents they see the worship of the deities performed by priests in their own or their neighbours' houses, and learn from their mothers the stories connected with the various deities; but they have no personal share in their worship. They are taught that the one object of their devotion is to obtain a husband. And at this early age their attention is directed to the two great evils that may be in store for them—the possibility of having a rival wife, and the loss of the husband whom they have been taught to regard as the one blessing of their existence.

Whilst they are still children their marriage is solemnized. The authority for this custom is the legislation of Manu: "The marriage of a girl is to be celebrated after she is seven years old, otherwise it becomes contrary to the dictates of religion. At the age of eight she becomes a Gauri (*i.e.* Siva's consort, who is regarded as the ideal Hindu wife). At the age of nine a Rohini

* "The Hindus as they are," p. 38.

(the wife of Chandra, the moon), at the age of ten an ordinary girl." In other words, the sooner she is married the better, after she is seven years of age. Manu says: "Reprehensible is the father who gives not his daughter in marriage at the proper time," and declares that if before she is eleven he has not provided her with a husband, she is justified in seeking one for herself. In teaching the duties of the two lowest of the four great castes, on the question of marriage, he declares that "a man aged thirty may marry a girl of twelve, if he find one dear to his heart; or a man of twenty-four years a damsel of eight." In his marriage regulations for Brāhmans, he is most particular. A Brāhman must avoid marrying a girl whose family "has omitted the prescribed forms of religion, that has produced no sons, that which has thick hair on the body, or is afflicted with hereditary diseases. Let him choose for his wife a girl whose form has no defect, who has an agreeable manner, who walks gracefully like a young elephant, and whose body has exquisite softness."

When a widower seeks another wife, widow-remarriage being repugnant to Hindu custom, as all girls are married before or at the age of twelve, he, however old, must take one of these children. And when a father has failed to obtain a bridegroom somewhat near the age of his daughter, he is only too glad to allow any one, though he be old, to relieve him of the disgrace attaching to a family in which there is an unmarried girl of twelve.

These children do not leave their fathers' house immediately after their marriage, but remain there until they are about twelve or thirteen. In the interval they may occasionally visit their father-in-law's house, and become, to some extent, familiar with their husband and his family before she goes to live there,

The worst feature of this system is seen in the case of the Kulin Brāhmans, the highest caste of all. This will be seen in the chapter describing the spiritual aristocracy. Their misery is great, and it is not surprising that many forsake their homes to live in immorality.

As the ordinary bridegroom is about twelve or fourteen years of age and the bride from seven to ten, it follows that on their side there can be no choice; in fact, it often happens that they meet for the first time on the wedding-day. The choice is made by their parents on their behalf. There are men and women called Ghataks, who act as marriage-brokers. Under instructions from a father who has a daughter to settle they search for a suitable bridegroom, and when they have found a father who has a marriageable son, they bring the parents together. Sometimes the assistance of a middleman is unnecessary; the fathers being old friends arrange for the marriage of their children; but generally the assistance of the professional Ghataks is asked.

As the Ghataks play an important part in Hindu society, it may be well to say a little more about them. The Ghatak "is the professional match-maker, and therefore an under-servant of Kāmadeva, the Indian Cupid. As in India, young men and women do not themselves choose their partners in life, they have to depend on the good offices of this happy functionary, who, however, bears his commission not from the parties themselves, but from their parents and guardians. . . . This worthy functionary's character is as amiable as his occupation is pleasant. He possesses the highest Christian virtue in perfection, as he has an unlimited measure of that charity which covers a multitude of

sins. He has never been known to find fault with any young man or young woman of marriageable age. The spinster may be as ugly as one of Shakespeare's witches, and the young man may be as deformed as deformity itself, the Ghatak sees no defect in either. The one in his eye, or at any rate in his mouth, is as beautiful and gentle as Lakshmi (the wife of Vishnu, the Venus of India), and the other as handsome and accomplished as Kartikeya (the Indian Mars). . . . A Ghatak, properly speaking, is a Brāhman of a very high order, and confines his services only to the priestly class. A Brāhman Ghatak is often a man of learning, and invariably a man of persuasive eloquence, and he has the whole of the Indian 'Burke's Peerage' and 'Baronetage' at his fingers' ends. But every caste has its own Ghataks,"* who are acquainted with the history of the families in their neighbourhood for generations.

Another Bengali gentleman writes much in the same strain.† "When an unmarried boy attains his seventeenth or eighteenth year, numbers of professional men, called Ghataks, or match-makers, come to the parents with overtures of marriage. These men are destitute of principle, but know how to pander to the frailties of human nature; most of them are great flatterers, and endeavour to impose on the parents in the most bare-faced manner. When the qualities of a girl are to be commended, they indulge in a strain of exaggeration, and unblushingly declare that 'she is beautiful as a full moon, the symmetry of her person is exact, her teeth are like the seeds of a pomegranate, her voice is sweet as that of the cuckoo, her gait is graceful, she speaks

* "Bengal Peasant Life," p. 87.

† "The Hindus as they are," p. 40,

like Lakshmi, and will bring fortune to any family she may be connected with.' . . . If the qualities of a youth are to be appraised, they describe him thus: 'He is beautiful as Kartikeya, his deportment is that of a nobleman, he is free from all vices, he studies day and night—in short, he is a precious gem and an ornament of the neighbourhood.'" This same writer goes on to state that, as in these matrimonial alliances the ladies of the household have a great deal to say, of late years women have largely supplanted men in the work of marriage brokerage, because they can gain access to the women's apartments, and by their influence lead to the rejection of alliances offered by the men, and recommend others in their place.

The first thing to be done when the overtures of the Ghatak have been favourably entertained, is for a representative of the boy's family, generally his father or guardian, to see the intended bride. The little girl is introduced to him, who, if satisfied, puts a gold mohur (£1 12*s.*) into her hand. A similar visit of inspection is then paid by the girl's father to the boy's house, and in like manner, if he be thought suitable, a gold mohur is placed in his hand as the expression of approval. An agreement is then drawn up by which the boy's father promises to marry his son to the girl, her father also agreeing to give his daughter; this is duly signed and witnessed. The contracting parties consult an almanac, and by the aid of the priests select a favourable day for the preliminary rite called the Gātraharidra, or anointing with turmeric. This takes place a few days before the wedding-day. "After bathing and putting on a red-bordered cloth, the bridegroom stands on a grindstone surrounded by four plantain trees, while four women (one must be a Brāhmani), whose husbands are living,

go round him five or seven times, anoint his body with turmeric, and touch his forehead with sacred water, betel leaf, etc. From this time until his marriage he must carry about with him a pair of silver nutcrackers, and the girl a case containing black dye used in beautifying the eyelids, for the purpose of repelling evil spirits. A little of the turmeric paste with which the body of the bridegroom has been anointed is sent by the family barber to the bride in a silver cup, with which she anoints her body."

Next comes the marriage ceremony. Before the bridegroom leaves his house he is superbly dressed in coloured clothes, and a grand procession, headed by a band of music, is formed, the youth riding in a gaily painted palanquin or carriage. As soon as he arrives at the house of the bride, he is conducted to a seat of red satin in the courtyard under an awning. When the guests are seated, the genealogies of the two families are proclaimed. After this the bridegroom, having put on a simple robe of red silk, is conducted to the place where the religious ceremony takes place. As soon as he is seated, the bride, closely veiled, is carried on a stool and placed on his left side. The priest gives the bridegroom a few blades of Kusa grass which he winds round his fingers, and a little Ganges water, which he holds in his hand whilst his father-in-law repeats a mantra. The bridegroom having placed his hand in a vessel of holy water, and the bride hers upon it, the priest ties them together with a garland of flowers. As soon as this is done the father of the girl says: "I ———, give ——— to thee——— " The bridegroom replies: "I have received her." The father-in-law having united their hands, and poured holy water on their heads, a form something like the following is

used. The bride's priest, addressing the bridegroom, says: "The bride says to you, 'If you live happy, keep me happy also; if you be in trouble, I will be in trouble also; you must support me, and must not leave me when I suffer; you must always keep with me, and pardon all my faults, and your pujas, pilgrimages, fastings, incense, and all other religious duties you must not perform without me; you must not defraud me regarding conjugal love; you must have nothing to do with another woman while I live; you must consult me in all that you do, and you must always tell me the truth. Vishnu, fire, and the Brāhmans are witnesses between you and me.'" The bridegroom replies: "I will all my lifetime do just as the bride requires of me, but she must also make me some promises: she must go with me through suffering and trouble, and must always be obedient to me; she must never go to her father's house unless she is asked by him; and when she sees another man in better circumstances, or more beautiful than I am, she must not despise or slight me." To this the bride replies: "I will all my life do just as you require of me; Vishnu, fire, and the Brāhmans are witnesses between us." After other texts have been recited bride and bridegroom bow to the sun. The bridegroom then raises his hand over the right shoulder of the bride, touches her heart, places a little vermilion on the parting of her hair, puts his shoes on her feet, and then removes them. A piece of silk cloth is now thrown over the heads of the newly-married couple, the bridegroom draws aside her veil, and, in many cases, sees her face for the first time. They are now conducted into the women's apartments, where amidst great merriment, he takes another peep at his wife's face. He then returns to the place of worship, and the religious

rites are concluded by the Hom, *i.e.* the burning a little ghi to the deities.

After all this is over there is great rejoicing throughout the night, and next morning the newly married couple are conducted to the bridegroom's home, where there is a repetition of the feasting and fun. On her arrival there her mother-in-law puts an iron bracelet on her wrist, and a little red powder on her forehead, the recognized signs that she is married. The girl then returns to her father's house, where she remains, except for an occasional visit, until the time comes for her permanently to reside with her husband.

The ceremonies that precede the final departure of a girl to her husband's home are much simpler. The priests are again in requisition. They recite the mantras, the hands of the two are joined by him, and several deities are worshipped with the object of obtaining a blessing upon the happy pair. The parting from the old home is often very sad, as meetings afterwards are not common; whilst, frequently, the condition of a young wife in her husband's family is anything but enviable. Being only a child, she is under the authority of the older ladies. Where they are kind, all is well; but where the opposite there is misery. From this time she is a member of the husband's family until death.

As soon as she arrives at her new home she enters the women's apartments and her freedom is at an end. In her father's house, though for years a wife, she could go into the more public apartments; was allowed, under the care of a servant, to attend school; and was nearly as unfettered in her movements as an English girl. But now the scene changes. She must live in the women's apartments, keep her face veiled when her brothers-in-law are present, and never be seen speaking

to her husband in the daytime. It would be esteemed wrong even to pronounce his name, or to touch his elder brothers. Seldom can she cross the threshold except to pay a visit to her father. Manu has taught that she is "unworthy of confidence, and the slave of passion," and the lesson has been learned only too well.

If the family into which she is brought be large and wealthy, there will not be much for her to do, as the housework will be done by the older ladies, by widows of the family, or by servants. She will never take her meals with her husband; he will eat with the other gentlemen of his family, whilst she will join the ladies. When the employment of the husband permits him to live at home, she has the prospect of his company in the evening; but when, as frequently happens, his work is at a distance, she may not see him for months at a time. Under these circumstances it is only natural that she should find her new life wearisome and monotonous. In the normal condition of society she would be unable to read, sew, or engage in the many forms of employment that engage the minds and fingers of the fair in England.

In the case of poor people there is an entirely different state of affairs. There the girls, as soon as they are married, find work in their new home, and generally, the companionship of a mother-in-law, widowed sister-in-law, or some older person, who acts as guardian in the absence of her husband. Hard though in some respects the lot of the poor in India may be, the condition of their women, considering the greater freedom they enjoy, and the employments they engage in, seems far to be preferred to that of their richer sisters, who are immured in prison-like apartments. The

description of their home life which follows is by a Bengali gentleman, who was familiar with it.

"The system of early marriage that prevails here has been justly condemned by all civilized nations, and it is really a marvel that parties so capriciously affianced in early age can live happily together afterwards to the end of their lives. The young bride, between ten and eleven years of age, generally simple, artless, and unlettered, even in the case of a respectable family, is brought up almost from her cradle to look upon her future lord with feelings of extreme submissiveness." I once met with rather an amusing case corroborative of this. A Christian convert of about thirty years of age wishing to get married, and coming to me for counsel, I advised him to marry a lady somewhere near his own age; but this idea was quite repugnant to his notions, as he said that if he took one as old as that she would not be brought into subjection as easily as a young girl! "She is a perfect stranger to freedom of action, if not actually to freedom of thought. When her reasoning faculties are somewhat developed, and she grows tired of a monotonous slavish existence, she naturally struggles to be free; but fate has otherwise ordained. The apartment in which she lives, the atmosphere she breathes, the mode of life she is enjoined to follow, the society she moves in, and the surroundings by which she is fenced —all attest the very abnormal restraints to which she is, at all hours of her life, subjected after her marriage. But she cannot altogether suppress human nature. With the development of her passions and desires the fetters of servitude gradually relax, she pants for a little freedom, because absolute freedom is denied her by the peculiar conventional rules by which she is governed, and, as a necessary consequence of this, she is permitted

to move about half unveiled within the precincts of her secluded domicile. And when she becomes the mother of two or three children, through the blessing of the goddess Sasthi, the conventional restraints by degrees give way, until through her age she becomes the *grihini*, or mistress of the house—a position which gives a great extension to her privileges. She then in her turn assumes the duties and discipline of the house, and seeks to correct any little impropriety she sees in its inmates.

"An Englishman, who is but superficially acquainted with the inner life of Hindu society, is apt to conclude from what is stated above that a native woman, hampered by so many restrictions, can seldom be happy in the proper sense of the word; but however paradoxical this may appear, the reverse is true. She feels quite happy and contented when Providence gives her what she values over every other worldly consideration—a good husband and dutiful sons and daughters. Brought up in a state of perfect isolation, and practically confined to restricted thought and action, her happiness is necessarily identified with that of a few beings who are near and dear to her. Although married when she is scarcely capable of thinking and judging for herself, yet, through the kind dispensation of an overruling Providence, she is destined in most cases to enjoy the blessings of a married life. The rites and ceremonies by which she is early united in the bonds of wedlock exert little or no influence on her in her maturer years. She becomes happy in spite of the domestic and social restrictions imposed on her by what Shakespeare calls the 'Monster Custom.' The gravity of the marriage compact is due to the religious incantations used on the occasion. Though their precise meaning is scarcely

understood by the boy-husband or the girl-wife, the influence of conventionalism is so powerful that a few words pronounced by the officiating priest prove absolutely binding on both to the end of their days. Nor can it be otherwise. As they advance in years, their mutual love and affection cement the bond of union that was so casually and capriciously formed. And even where the individual tempers, dispositions, habits, and ideas are irreconcilable, as is sometimes the case, open rupture between the parties is very rare, if not altogether impossible. In respectable families, in which a husband is educated, and a wife not educated, and moreover ill-tempered, a sense of honour and propriety, which is shocked at the slightest whisper of scandal, restrains the former from having recourse to a separation from the latter, even if he were so disposed. Thus we see the very difference in their characters and dispositions gradually overcome. The law of divorce was not known in the country before the English came into it. The fear of scandal, even where there is sufficient justification for it, suppresses everything at its incipient stage." *

The following extract from a book written by a Hindu lady on the duty of wives to their husbands is quite in accordance with the teaching of their Scriptures, and may be taken as a fair representation of the position of the Hindu wife: "The husband is the wife's religion, the wife's sole business, the wife's all-in-all. The wife should meditate on her husband as Brahmā. For her, all pilgrimages should be concentrated on her husband's feet. The command of a husband is as obligatory as a precept of the Vedas. To a chaste wife her husband is her god. When the husband is pleased Brahmā is

* "The Hindus as they are," p. 287.

pleased. The merit of waiting on the feet of the husband is equivalent to the merit of performing all the pilgrimages in the world. To obey the husband is to obey the Vedas. To worship the husband is to worship the gods. The husband is the wife's spiritual guide (guru), her honour, the giver of her happiness, the bestower of fortune, righteousness, and heaven, her deliverer from sorrow and from sin." *

In harmony with this modern guide to wives, is the following extract from the Vishnu Purāna, where a very curious question is under discussion, viz. at what season in the world's history the least amount of merit obtained the highest heavenly reward. The learned men, unable to settle this question themselves, repaired to Veda Vyāsa, whom they found bathing. As his head rose above the water the first time he said, "Excellent is the Kali Yuga;" the second time, "Well done, Sudra; thou art happy;" and the third time, "Well done, women; they are happy. Who are more fortunate than they?" On being asked for an explanation of these utterances, the sage declared the Kali Yuga (the fourth and worst of the four ages of the world) excellent, because a single day and night's devotion obtained, as a reward, as much blessedness as the devotion of a month in the Dwāpara, or a year in the Treta, or as ten years in the Krita. And, further, the same blessedness that in the other ages is gained by abstract meditation, sacrifice, or adoration, is in the Kali Yuga gained by the mere repetition of the name of Keshava (Vishnu). In a similar manner he explained that whilst the Brāhmans had laborious duties assigned to them, the Sudra had simply to wait upon them, and had far fewer restrictions laid upon his actions and food. And woman, for a similar reason, he declared

* *Calcutta Review*, vol. xlix. p. 39.

to be happy, because by simply loving and honouring her husband she is able to attain the position, however exalted that may be, which he has attained as the result of immense exertion.

It is difficult for Europeans to realize what the position of the well-to-do women in India really is. Accustomed to go out whenever they wish to transact business or see friends, to receive guests in their houses, to enjoy the companionship of their husbands as their equals, and to know that the love of their husbands is based upon confidence in their love and trustworthiness, it seems almost impossible to imagine a state of society where all this is reversed. A Hindu lady sees in the character of her apartments, and in the fact that she cannot go outside her home without elaborate arrangements being made to secure her privacy on the journey, that her husband regards her as one who may easily be led into sin. Shut out by ignorance from the world of literature, and from the pleasure of profitably employing her mind and hands in work, she can only waste her days in frivolous occupations. Prohibited by custom from conversation with her husband except in her own chamber, and, by want of education, from sharing in his thoughts and from being his companion in the true sense of the word, she feels that she is little more to him than a ministrant of his pleasures. The husband finds companionship amongst the gentlemen of his family and others, and is independent, to a large extent, of the pleasure the company and conversation of a wife would afford. Hindus are astonished to see Englishmen entrust their wives to the protection of a friend during a journey by rail or steamer: only their fathers or brothers are deemed suitable as an escort.

It would be unwise to say that under such circumstances

there can be no happiness ; but that educated husbands feel the great disparity between themselves and their wives there can be no doubt. A graduate of a University, whose mind has been actively engaged on great questions, cannot have much in common with a girl who cannot read. This was once put to me strangely, though forcibly, by one in this position, as he said, "Educated Hindu gentlemen are doomed to perpetual widowhood," *i.e.* to a life of solitude, so far as communion with their wives is concerned. The great progress made of late in female education, is largely owing to the fact that educated men desire companionship in their wives, and has led many to devote their leisure time to their instruction. Women secluded and uneducated may not be always and altogether miserable ; but the highest form of happiness—that which is experienced by man and wife bound together by mutual affection and respect—cannot be known by those who are the slaves of their husbands.

Women, ignorant and degraded though they be, exert great influence on their husbands and children. Some of the rich and highly respected members of Hindu society have confessed that they owe their success in life to the sympathy, encouragement, and carefulness of their wives. And as they, as a rule, are most religious, their influence over sons and husbands in religious matters is immense. Many educated Hindus who have lost all faith in the religion of their fathers maintain an outward conformity to its practices, largely owing to their desire not to give offence to the ladies of their household. But where there is equality in culture, as well as natural intelligence, of course that influence is vastly increased.

Keshub Chundra Sen, in one of his addresses in

England, teaches in a humorous way that women exert great influence in the homes of India as in other countries. "Woman has been defined as an adjective, agreeing with the noun man. I should rather say that man is a noun in the objective case, governed by the verb woman."

## CHAPTER III.

### WIDOWS.

A MORE painful subject than that now to be considered it would be difficult to imagine. It seems as if the legislators had studied to make a widow's life as miserable as possible. Manu teaches that it is unlawful for a widow to mention the name of another man, and that by re-marriage "she brings disgrace on herself, and shall be excluded from the seat of her lord." In these words there is as real a prohibition as if he had in so many words forbidden re-marriage. And though he did not order the Hindus to intensify the pain of her bereavement, he declared that it was her own duty to do so.

Custom ordains the following duties for a widow, and in most cases they are strictly followed. She must regularly take but one meal a day, and twice in a month miss that, *i.e.* go without food or water for forty-eight hours. The Sanātan Dharma Rākshini Sabha, the highest authority in matters religious in Bengal, influenced to some extent by the spirit of the age, recently decided that if, on medical authority, this severe fast was dangerous, she might take a little water. She must wear white clothes only, not even a coloured border being allowed; give up all jewels; take off the iron wire bracelet, and remove the spot of red paint

from her forehead, which indicated that she was a married woman; absent herself from all festive gatherings, and generally deny herself of the comforts of life. The following account is by one of themselves, and may be accepted as a truthful picture of their sad life.

"There are four principal castes amongst Hindus, and of them all, I think the third caste, the Kayasthas, to which I belong, make their widows suffer most.

"All are treated badly enough, but our customs are much worse than those of some others. In the Punjab they are not always strict in enforcing their customs with widows; but though we live in the Punjab, our family comes from the North-West, and as we are rich and well-to-do, our customs are kept up scrupulously.

"When a husband dies, his wife suffers as much as if the death-angel had come for her also. She must not be approached by any of her relations, but several women, from three to six (wives of barbers, a class who are kept up for this object), are in waiting, and as soon as the husband's last breath is drawn, they rush at the new-made widow, and tear off her ornaments. Ear and nose rings are dragged off, often tearing the cartilage, ornaments plaited in with the hair are torn away, and if the arms are covered with gold and silver bracelets, they do not take the time to draw them off one by one, but holding her arm on the ground, they hammer with a stone, until the metal, often solid and heavy, breaks in two; it matters not to them how many wounds they inflict, they have no pity, not even if the widow is but a child of six or seven, who does not know what a husband means.*

"At that time two sorrows come upon every widow—

* In Bengal a widow may continue to wear some of her ornaments until she is twelve years of age.

one from God and one from her own people, who should cherish and support her, but who desert and execrate her. If the husband dies away from home, on the arrival of the fatal news, all this is done. At the funeral, the relatives, men as well as women, have to accompany the corpse to the burning ghat. If they are rich and have carriages, they must not use them, but go on foot. The men follow the corpse, the women (all the ladies well covered from sight) come after, and last the widow, led along by the barbers' wives. They take care that at least 200 feet intervene between her and any other woman, for it is supposed that if her shadow fell on any (her tormentors excepted) she also would become a widow; therefore no relative, however much sympathy she may feel in secret, dare look on her face. One of the rough women goes in front, and shouts aloud to any passer-by to get out of the way of the accursed thing, as if the poor widow were a wild beast; the others drag her along.

"Arrived at the river, tank, or well, where the body is to be burned, they push her into the water, and as she falls, so she must lie, with her clothes on, until the body has been burned, all the company have bathed, washed their clothes, and dried them. When they are ready to start for home, but not before, they drag her out, and in her wet things she must trudge home. It matters not what the weather is, in a burning sun, or with icy wind blowing from the Himalayas. They care not if she dies. Oh, I would rather choose the Sati!

"Many are happy enough to die in consequence of these sorrows, for however ill they may become, no care is taken of them, or medicine given.

"I once went to a funeral (before I was myself a

widow), where the burning ghat was three ghos (about six miles) from the city. It was the hottest month of the year, and though we started at sunrise, we did not reach the house again till 3 p.m. I shall never forget how much we women suffered from the hot blasting wind that blew on us like fire, and the blazing sun. We were almost worn out with heat and thirst, though we had stopped often to rest and drink. The poor widow dared not ask for a drink, or she would have lost her character; the women with her might have given her water if they had liked, but they would not.

"At last she fell, but they pulled her up again and dragged her on, told her not to give way, she was not the only widow, and taunted her, when she wept, with wanting a husband. When she had no strength left even to crawl, they dragged her along like a bundle of clothes.

"On arrival at the house she was flung on the floor in a little room; still, though they knew she was almost dead with thirst, they did not give her a drop of water, and she dared not ask for any. She was a relative of mine, but none of us dared go near her, for it would have brought down maledictions on the head of any one who tried it. At last one young woman, after watching a long while, saw her opportunity, and slipped in with a vessel of water. The widow ran at her like a wild creature. I cannot describe how she behaved; at first she did not recognize her friend—she drank, and drank, till life and sense came back to her. Then she fell down at the feet of her who had brought the water, and embracing them, said: 'Oh, sister! I will never forget what you have done for me! You are my God—my second creator! But go away quickly, I pray, that no one may ever find out what you have done, or

we shall both suffer. I promise I will never tell of you.'

"For fifteen days after a funeral the relatives must eat and drink only once in the day (twenty-four hours); but the widow must keep up this for a year, with frequent fasts. When she returns from the funeral she must sit or lie in a corner on the ground in the same clothes she had on when her husband died, whether still wet or by this time dry. Now and then one of the barbers' wives comes and looks after her, or if she is poor and not able to pay for their further *kind* attentions, she must sit alone. Oh, cruel place! Each widow knows you well, and remembers you with bitterness! Separated from her husband, though she lives she is not alive! Not only is she deprived of comforts, but her friends add to her misery. Though she is in her corner alone, and must not speak to any one, they are near, and talk at her in this way: her mother says, 'Unhappy creature! I can't bear the thought of any one so vile—I wish she had never been born.' Her mother-in-law says, 'The horrid viper! she has bitten my son and killed him; now *he* is dead, and *she*, useless creature, is left behind.' And this, even though the speakers may themselves be widows. Every indignity that the tongue can speak is heaped upon her, lest the standers-by, or perchance the gods, should think they had sympathy with her.

"O God! I pray Thee, let no more women be born in this land!

"The sister-in-law says, 'I will not look at her or speak to such a thing!' They comfort the dead man's mother, and say, 'It is your daughter-in-law, vile thing! who has destroyed your house; curse her! For her sake you have to mourn for the rest of your life.'

"To the widow they say, 'What good are you? Why are you still living in the world?' If she cry, and shows her grief, they all say, 'How immodest, how abandoned—see, she is crying for a husband!' They have no pity. Only those who have been through this know what it is. You must feel this grief to prove it. Whose foot has the chilblain feels the pain. For thirteen days the widow must sit and bear this.

"On the eleventh day comes a Brāhman, like a policeman for a culprit, orders money, and oil, and other things to be given. However poor the widow may be, money, or the promise of it, must be given; from the very poorest at least Rs. 13. Other Brāhmans make other demands, and if the family is rich their demands are very high. A poor widow has often to labour hard for months at grinding, or some other work, to earn money to satisfy their claims.

"O Lord! why hast Thou created us to make us suffer thus? From birth to death sorrow is our portion. While our husbands live we are their slaves; when they die we are still worse off. But they have all they wish here, and promises for the life to come.

"The thirteenth day is a bad day, though then the widow may take off the clothes she has worn ever since her husband died, and may bathe. The relatives all gather and lay rupees before the widow, which are supposed to be a provision for her for life. They do not spare their reproaches. If the rupees given amount to any large sum, it is taken charge of by some relative, who doles it out.

"Now again the Brāhmans come for more money. The widow's head is shaved, and there is another Brāhmanical tax. Then the barbers' wives have to be paid. Six weeks after the husband's death the widow must

once again put on the hated clothes she wore for those thirteen days—abhorred garments! If a widow by chance catches sight of them she shudders as if a fresh widowhood were hers, and then, if possible, she must go on a pilgrimage to the Ganges, and, after bathing there, the clothes may be thrown away in the river.

"After a year has passed away, a widow who is living with her father and mother may wear ornaments again.* But why is this? If you ask the parents, they say, 'Poor girl! she has not seen much of life; if she cannot wear jewels now while we are with her, she can never wear them, and how can she pass a long life without jewels? We can't bear to see her naked; how could we wear jewels and she sit before us bare?'

"But I say, if they cannot bear to see her pass her life without jewels, how can they bear to see her pass her life without a husband or any of the pleasures of life? A veil of ignorance has fallen upon them, so that they cannot see things in their right light. If they cannot bear to see her sorrow, they should let her marry again. What medicine for a wounded spirit will she find in jewels? Let them first take some care for her heart. As our homes are managed, how can they expect that a widow will remain pure? She has never been taught, any more than her brothers or cousins, to restrain her passions. Let those who can marry wear jewels, but not those who have no hope of marrying; and let not little children take the name and place of widows. Jewels are, for widows, a great help on the downward road. I write of what I know and have seen. All men and women love to adorn themselves, but especially women love to do so, that they may be seen and look fine. If widows wear jewels they will be

* This custom does not prevail in Bengal.

sought after. I do not say that all widows who wear jewels are bad, but I do say they have taken one step on the bad road. Alas! that it is the parents who open the way for beloved daughters to go wrong. Then when consequences follow they are ready to kill them.

"The widows who have no parents are still more to be pitied; they have to become servants to their brothers' or sons' wives. Every one knows that if there are widows in a house servants need not be hired. A sister-in law rules over a widow, and they quarrel night and day. If a widow remains in her husband's house, it is the same; she is hated by mother and sister-in-law, and beaten from place to place. If, for the sake of peace, she would like to live alone, she loses her character. If she has children she works for them while they are young; when her sons marry she becomes their wives' servant. If a widow is childless and rich (by the money given her at her husband's death), her relatives choose some boy to be her heir, and to be provided for by her. She may bring him up with love and care, but when he gets big he takes her property, and only allows her food and clothes while she waits on his wife. A widow has no power over property supposed to be her own. It is happier for a widow to be poor, and earn her living by grinding corn!

"Amongst us, women can inherit no cowrie of their father's wealth, it all goes to their brothers. Neither do they inherit what their husbands leave. They have only what may be given them, and if it is a lump sum, perhaps they are silly, and spend it foolishly; they are not taught to take care of it properly. If a wife die she is burned in her best clothes and jewels, but a widow's corpse is wrapped in white cloth. It is

supposed that if she came to her husband in the next life without the show of mourning, he would not receive her.

"Why do the widows of India suffer so? Not for religion or piety. It is not written in our ancient books. In none of the Sāstras or in the Mahābhārata is there any sign of this suffering. What Pandit has brought it on us? Alas! that all hope is taken from us. We have not sinned; then, why are thorns instead of flowers given to us?

"Thousands of us die, but more live. I saw a widow die, one of my cousins. She had been ill before her husband's death. When he died she was too weak to be dragged to the river. She was in a burning fever; her mother-in-law called a water-carrier, and had four large skins of water poured over her as she lay on the ground, where she had been thrown from her bed when her husband died. The chill of death came upon her, and after lying alone and untended for eight hours, her breath ceased. Every one praised her, and said she had died for love of her husband.

"I knew another woman who did not love her husband, for all their friends knew that they quarrelled so much that they could not live together. The husband died suddenly away from home, and when the widow heard the news she threw herself off the roof and was taken up dead. She could not bear the thought of the degradation before her. She was praised by all. A book full of such instances might be written. The only difference for us since Sati was abolished is, that we then died quickly, if cruelly, but now we die all our lives in lingering pain.

"We are aghast at the great number of widows; how is it there are so many? The answer is, that if an

article is constantly supplied and never used up, it must accumulate. So it is with widows; nearly every man or boy who dies leaves one, often more; so, though thousands die, more live on.

"The English have abolished Sati; but, alas! neither the English nor the angels know what goes on in our homes. And Hindus not only don't care, but think it good! What! do not Hindus fear what such oppression may lead to? If the widow's shadow is to be dreaded, why do they darken and overshadow the whole land with it?

"I am told that in England they comfort widows' hearts; but there is no comfort for us."

Anything more pathetic and heart-rending than the foregoing statement of the condition of myriads of widows in India it would be hard to imagine. But lest it should seem too black a picture, I add a passage from Mr. Dey's book on Hindu village life, which to some extent corroborates, and to some extent modifies it; probably both are equally true, though not of the same families. "English people have somehow or other got the idea that a Hindu widow receives harsh and cruel treatment from the relations of her husband. That is not true. There are, no doubt, exceptional cases, but, as a general rule, Hindu widows are not only not ill-treated, but they meet with a vast deal of sympathy. Old widows, in a Bengali Hindu family, are often the guides and counsellors of those who style themselves the lords of creation. . . . Old widows, provided they have intelligence and good character, assert, on account of their experience in life, their superiority over men younger than they. As to the privations of life, a little too much is made of them. Besides the one supreme privation of having the fountain of their affections sealed

up, the others, of which foreign writers make so much, are not worth speaking about. The most considerable of these minor privations is that only one meal is permitted them in twenty-four hours. But this restraint will cease to be regarded as a privation when it is considered that a widow's meal is usually larger in quantity and heavier in weight than that of a married woman; that the meal is taken in the afternoon, not many hours before sleep; that most widows are sleek and stout, and that many of the strong and able-bodied peasants of the North-Western Provinces, and the Hindu sepoys of the Bengal army, take only one meal in twenty-four hours." This is rather a strong way of putting it; but it overlooks the fact that those who partake of one meal a day only can eat when hungry, and drink when thirsty; but with the widow these resources are not available. Moreover, it is one thing to continue in habits that have been formed from infancy, and quite a different thing suddenly to give up habits that have become parts of one's nature. And again, in the case of the widow, she has this additional cause of anguish: she is taught that it is owing to some sin in a previous birth that she is now called to suffer the pains incident to her position. From what I have heard of their sadness and sorrow, and from the blessings promised to the Sati, or faithful wife, who ascended the funeral pile with her husband, I am not surprised that as long as the law permitted it, many preferred a few moments of physical agony, with the hope of gaining a heavenly mansion with their lord, rather than continue in the misery which is the normal condition of the widows of Hindus to this day.

Although the practice of Sati has been prohibited since 1830, as frequent reference has been made to it in

this work, and it is clearly taught in the Hindu Scriptures to be the duty of a widow to end her days in this cruel fashion, an account of it here will not be out of place.

It is impossible to say when this rite first came into favour. The name Sati is given to Parvati, when, angry with her father for omitting to invite her husband to his feast, she destroyed herself by fire; but in this case, though she proved herself "a faithful wife," as the name implies, she burned herself, but not with her husband's body. As she manifested faithfulness, even to death, in the interests of her husband, the name has been given to those widows who, by their self-immolation, have shown similar devotion.

In Vedic times it seems certain that this rite was not practised, nor is there a single text in the Vedas authorizing it. There is a text, however, which, by a wilful mis-translation, has been used by the priests as an authority for the practice, concerning which Max Müller says: "This is perhaps the most flagrant instance of what can be done by an unscrupulous priesthood." This text, which was repeated by the officiating priest as the widow walked round the pyre on which her husband's corpse was placed, is as follows: "Om! Let those women, not to be widowed, good wives adorned with collyrium, holding clarified butter, consign themselves to the fire. Immortal, not childless, not husbandless, well adorned with gems, let them pass into the fire, whose original element was water." The correct translation is the following: "May these women, *who are not widows*, draw near with oil and butter. Let those who are mothers go first to the *altar*, without sorrow, but decked with fine jewels." * The passage evidently refers to

* "Vedic Religion," p. 32.

ordinary sacrifices, and not to the immolation of widows.

The texts on which it is founded are the following:—

"The wife who commits herself to flames with her husband's corpse shall equal Arundhati, and reside in Swarga."

"Accompanying her husband, she shall reside so long in Swarga as the 35,000,000 of hairs on the human body."

"As the snake-catcher forcibly drags the serpent from his earth, so bearing her husband [from hell] with him shall she enjoy heavenly bliss."

"Dying with her husband, she sanctifies her maternal and paternal ancestors, and the ancestors of him to whom she gave her virginity."

"Such a wife, adoring her husband, in celestial felicity with him, greatest and most admired, shall enjoy the delights of heaven while fourteen Indras reign."

"Though a husband had killed a Brāhman, broken the ties of gratitude, or murdered a friend, she expiates the crime."

It should be noticed that whilst promising these blessings to the widow who performs the rites of Sati, the Brahmā Purāna teaches that it is optional with a widow to burn, or to adopt a life of austerity such as has already been described; but having once decided to be burned, she must proceed with the ceremony, or incur defilement.

The first authentic account of a Sati is of one which occurred about the year 1176. The lady's name was Sanjogatā, daughter of Jadchand, the last Hindu king of Kanouj, the wife of Prithivirāja, the last Hindu king of Delhi. At that time princesses at least were allowed to select their own husbands at Swayambaras, or

tournaments, held for this purpose. When her father inaugurated the festival, owing to an old and bitter feud between the parties, Prithivirāja was not invited ; but an effigy of him being placed as a doorkeeper, the princess, passing by the princes present, placed the garland upon its neck, as she had heard so much of the martial exploits of him whom it represented. Soon after this the prince carried her away by force. She completely captivated her capturer by the force of her love and beauty. About a year after this, as the Mussulmān conquerors were at their gates, Prithivirāja went out to fight them. During his absence she lived most simply, having a presentiment that she should never see his face again. This proved only too true. The enemy prevailed, her beloved husband was slain; and as soon as the news reached her, she ordered a funeral pyre to be prepared, and of her own accord entered it.

From the reports of eye-witnesses of the performance of the Sati rite, it is evident that some widows went, in the spirit of true devotion to their husbands, and with the hope of obtaining the blessedness promised, to perform this dreadful rite; whilst others, owing to the disgrace which attached to one who vowed, but had not courage to perform her vow, were drugged, so as to be unconscious of what was before them ; whilst the precaution was also taken of tying down the wood upon the victim, so that escape was impossible. From Government returns we learn that, early in the century, in Bengal alone the annual number who thus ended their days was about twelve hundred. This will show the dread of a widow's miserable life, and the power of a superstitious belief in the benefits the endurance of a Sati's death would ensure.

The following description is from Colonel Sleeman's

notes written at the time of the occurrence. It is somewhat lengthy, but as the performance of the rite was prohibited the following year by Lord William Bentinck, this was one of the last that was legal. As late as 1880 it was reported that in one of the Native States the cruel ceremony was secretly observed.

"On receiving civil charge of the district, I issued a proclamation prohibiting any one from aiding or abetting in Sati, and distinctly stating, that to bring one ounce of wood for the purpose would be considered as so doing. . . .

"On Tuesday, November 24, 1829, I had an application from the heads of the most respectable and most extensive family of Brāhmans in the district, to suffer an old widow to burn herself with the remains of her husband, Omed Sing Opuddea, who had that morning died on the banks of the Nerbudda. I threatened to enforce my order, and punish severely any who assisted, and placed a police-guard for the purpose of seeing that no one did so. She remained sitting by the edge of the water without eating or drinking. The next day the body of her husband was burned to ashes in a small pit before several thousand spectators, who had assembled to see the Sati. All strangers dispersed before evening, as there seemed to be no prospect of my yielding to the urgent solicitations of her family, who dared not touch food till she had burned herself, or declared herself willing to return to them. Her sons, grandsons, and other relations remained with her, while the rest surrounded my house, the one urging me to allow her to burn, and the other urging her to desist. She remained sitting on a bare rock in the bed of the Nerbudda, refusing every kind of sustenance, and exposed to the intense heat of the sun by day, and the severe cold of

the night, with only a thin sheet thrown over her shoulders. On Thursday, to cut off all hope of her being moved from her purpose, she put on the *Dhujja*, or coarse red turban, and broke her bracelets in pieces, by which she became dead in law, and for ever excluded from caste. Should she choose to live after this, she could never return to her family. She had resolved to die. 'I have,' said she, 'tasted largely of the bounty of the Government, having been maintained by it with all my large family in ease and comfort upon our rent-free lands; and I feel assured my children will not be suffered to want; but with them I have nothing more to do; our intercourse and communion end here. My soul is with *Omed Sing Opuddea*, and my ashes must here mix with his.' Again looking to the sun—'I see them together,' said she, with a tone and countenance that affected me a great deal, 'under the bridal canopy,' alluding to the ceremonies of marriage; and I am satisfied that she at that moment really believed that she saw her own spirit and that of her husband under the bridal canopy in Paradise.

"I tried to work upon her pride and fears. I told her that it was probable that the rent-free lands by which her family had been so long supported might be resumed by Government as a mark of its displeasure against the children for not dissuading her from the sacrifice; that the temples over her ancestors might be levelled with the ground, in order to prevent their operating to induce others to make similar sacrifices; and lastly, that not one brick or stone should ever mark the place where she died, if she persisted in her resolution. But if she consented to live, a splendid habitation should be built for her amongst these temples—a handsome provision assigned for her support out of these

rent-free lands—her children should come daily to visit her, and I should frequently do the same. She smiled, but held out her arm and said, 'My pulse has long ceased to beat, my spirit has departed, and I have nothing left but a little *earth* that I wish to mix with the ashes of my husband. I shall suffer nothing in burning, and if you wish proof, order some fire, and you shall see this arm consumed without giving me any pain.' I did not attempt to feel her pulse, but some of my people did, and declared that it had ceased to be perceptible. At this time every native present believed that she was incapable of suffering pain; and her end confirmed them in that opinion.

"Satisfied myself that it would be unavailing to attempt to save her life, I sent for the principal members of her family, and consented that she should be suffered to burn herself if they would enter into engagements that no other member of their family should ever do the same. This they agreed to, and the papers having been drawn out in due form, about midday I sent notice to the old lady, who seemed extremely pleased and thankful. The ceremonies of bathing were gone through before three, while the wood and other combustible materials for a strong fire were collected, and put into the pit. After bathing, she called for a pān (betel-leaf), and ate it, then rose up, and with one arm on the shoulder of her eldest son, and the other on that of her nephew, approached the fire. I had sentries placed all round, and no other person was allowed to approach within five paces. As she rose up, fire was set to the pile, and it was instantly in a blaze. The distance was about 150 yards: she came on with a calm and cheerful countenance, stopped once, and casting her eyes upward, said, 'Why have they kept me five days from

thee, my husband?' On coming to the sentries her supporters stopped; she walked once round the pit, paused a moment, and, whilst muttering a prayer, threw some flowers into the fire. She then walked up deliberately and calmly to the brink, stepped into the centre of the flame, sat down, and leaning back in the midst as if reposing upon a couch, was consumed without uttering a shriek or betraying one sign of agony. A few instruments of music had been provided, and they played as usual as she approached the fire; not, as is commonly supposed, in order to drown screams, but to prevent the last words of the victim from being heard, as these are supposed to be prophetic, and might become sources of pain or strife to the living. It was not expected that I should yield, and but few people had assembled to witness the sacrifice, so that there was little or nothing to stimulate her to any extraordinary exertions; and I am persuaded that it was the desire of again being united to her husband in the next world, and the entire confidence that she would be so if she now burned herself, that alone sustained her. From the morning of the day he died, Tuesday, till Wednesday evening, she ate pān, or betel-leaves, but nothing else; and from Wednesday evening she ceased eating them. She drank no water from Tuesday. She went into the fire with the same cloth about her that she had worn in the bed of the river; but it was made wet, from a persuasion that even the shadow of any impure thing falling upon her when going to the pile contaminates the woman, unless counteracted by the sheet moistened in the holy stream. I must do the family the justice to say, that they all exerted themselves to dissuade the widow from her purpose; and had she lived, she would assuredly have been cherished and honoured as the first female

member of the whole house." It appears that thirteen years before this woman had firmly resolved, if left a widow, to die the death of a Sati.

To turn now to a less painful subject, a brief account will be given of the improvements that are visible in the condition of the women of India. At present this amelioration is confined to comparatively few; but the number is increasing, and in time what is enjoyed by a privileged few may become common to many.

Education is spreading rapidly amongst the girls and women of the middle classes. When missionaries commenced work amongst the girls, it was with the greatest difficulty that they could induce parents to allow them to learn. Before this time, those who were intended for a life of prostitution received some instruction to make them attractive to their visitors; hence education in women was associated with immorality. In order to overcome their prejudice, parents had to be paid to send their daughters to school. The conservatism of the older members of the family strongly opposed it, on the ground that the gods would be angry and show their displeasure by removing the husbands of girls who were taught. Were the history of female education in India written, it would contain stories of schools almost deserted owing to a scholar becoming a widow; the old women pointing to her as an object of displeasure to the gods for departing from time-honoured customs. But gradually all this has been changed by the quiet and persistent efforts of the ladies of various missionary societies, until nowadays in a great number of houses are those who have been at school, and are able to read and write fairly well.

The Zenana work, which of late years has so greatly excited the interest of ladies in Europe and America

grew out of the school work. When her pupils had grown too old to attend school, they asked Mrs. Mullens if she could not continue her work in their homes. She did so; and from this small beginning the great work that is now going on in India has grown. As education spread amongst the boys and young men they naturally wished to have educated wives; and within the last few years Hindu girls have obtained the B.A. degree in the Calcutta University. Within a little more than a generation the education of girls and women in India has rapidly developed. Forty years ago women's minds were regarded as unfit for cultivation; now some of the most highly educated members of society are women. Few communities can point to greater changes in so short a time.

In some classes of the community, especially the progressive Brāhmos, other improvements have been effected in the position of women. In their mandir, or church, seats are appropriated for ladies, and week after week those who in the normal state of Hindu society would have remained immured in the dark recesses of their home attend public worship. Brahmo gentlemen occasionally take their wives to visit Europeans. By friendly intercourse of this kind the way is being prepared for the ladies to pass from slavery to freedom.

During the Calcutta Exhibition a great mark of progress was seen in the fact that thousands of Hindu ladies were permitted to witness the great show. In bands of four to twenty they went under the guidance of their young brothers-in-law, or the Zenāna teachers of the various missions, and were greatly interested in the wonders collected together. The retrospect of this visit must give immense delight to multitudes who, for years, had not been permitted to see or be seen by the outside

world. Some Hindu gentlemen went so far as to say that, had the Exhibition continued open for a year, the doors of the Zenāna Khanahs would never have been closed again; the ladies, having tasted the sweets of liberty, would not have been content to remain immured. A great deal of talk is indulged in against the Zenāna system by the educated Hindus; and in time the present state of affairs, so far as woman is concerned, will pass away. Ignorance and slavery can co-exist; education and slavery cannot. To educate is to enfranchise; and such eventually must be its result in India.

# CASTE.

# CHAPTER I.

## ORIGIN OF CASTE.

PRIDE of birth is not confined to the Hindus. Wherever there has been the belief that the gods have dwelt amongst mortals, there has been an endeavour to show that some of the residents in those lands are their descendants, and consequently entitled to greater honour and privilege than the rest of their fellow-countrymen. A man who could trace his descent from a god expected and generally received a greater share of reverence and riches than ordinary mortals who were fashioned by his hands. In modern times, the privileges of our nobility compared with those of the high caste families of India are as nothing. "The existence of a common brotherhood in the human family and the practice of a common sympathy and succour have, by the majority of men, been grievously overlooked. Tyranny, mischief, and cruelty have been most extensively the consequence of anti-social presumption and pretension. The constant experience of the general observer of human nature has been not unlike that of the Hebrew sage Agur, the son of Jakeh :—

"'There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes,
And yet is not washed from their filthiness.
There is a generation, O how lofty are their eyes!
And their eyelids are lifted up.

There is a generation whose teeth are as swords,
And their jaw-teeth as knives,
To devour the poor from off the earth,
And the needy from among men.' *

"It is among the Hindus, however, that the imagination of natural and positive distinction in humanity has been brought to the most fearful and pernicious development ever exhibited on the face of the globe. The doctrine and practice of what is called caste, as held and observed by this people, has been only dimly shadowed by the worst social arrangements which were of old to be witnessed amongst the proudest nations, and among the proudest orders of men in those nations. The Egyptians, who, according to Herodotus, considered themselves 'the most ancient of all nations,' and who are described by him as 'excessively religious beyond any other people,' and 'too much addicted to their ancestorial customs to adopt any other,' most nearly approached them in their national and family pretensions, and the privilege and customs of priests and people viewed in reference to descent and occupation; but in the multitude, diversity, complication, and burdensomeness of their religious and social distinction, the Hindus have left the Egyptians far behind. Indian caste is the condensation of all the pride, jealousy, and tyranny of an ancient and predominant people dealing with the tribes which they have subjected, and over which they have ruled, often without the sympathies of a recognized common humanity." †

Caste is a Portuguese word, "signifying cast, mould, race, kind, and quality. It was applied originally by the Portuguese, to designate the peculiar system of religious and social distinctions which they observed

* Prov. xxx. 12–14. † "Caste," by Dr. Wilson, p. 11.

among the Hindu people, particularly as founded on race. The Indian word which partially corresponds with caste is *Jāti* = gens, and γένος, 'race or nation'; while *Jāti-bheda* means the distinctions of race. Varna, another word used for it by the Hindus, originally meant a difference in colour. Gradually these Indian words, conveniently rendered by caste, have come to represent not only varieties of race and colour, but every original, hereditary, religious, instituted, and conventional distinction which it is possible to conceive." To give some idea of the minute regulations of this system, and how its laws are framed to regulate the life of its slaves, it may be mentioned that "it has for infancy, pupilage, and manhood its ordained methods of sucking, sipping, drinking, and eating; of washing, anointing; of clothing and ornamenting the body; of sitting, rising, reclining; of moving, visiting, travelling; of speaking, reading, listening, and reciting; and of meditating, singing, working, and fighting. It has its laws for social and religious rites, privileges and occupations; for education, duty, religious service; for errors, sins, transgressions; for intercommunion, avoidance, and excommunication; for defilement and purification; for fines and other punishments. It unfolds the ways of committing what it calls sins, accumulating sin, and of putting away sin; of acquiring, dispensing, and losing merit. It treats of inheritance, conveyance, possession, and dispossession of property; and of bargains, gains, loss, and ruin. It deals with death, burial, and burning; and with commemoration, assistance, and injury after death. It interferes, in short, with all the relations and events of life, and with what precedes and follows, or what is supposed to precede and follow, life. It reigns supreme in the innumerable classes and divisions of the

Hindus, whether they originate in family descent, in religious opinions, in civil or sacred occupations, or in local residence; and it professes to regulate all their interests, affairs, and relationships. Caste is the guiding principle of each of the classes and divisions of the Hindus viewed in their distinct and associated capacity. A caste is any of the classes or divisions of Hindu society. The authority of caste rests partly on written laws, partly on legendary fables and narratives, partly on the injunctions of instructors and priests, partly on custom and usage, and partly on the caprice and convenience of its votaries. 'The roots of the law,' says Manu, 'are the whole Veda.'"

The following account of the creation of man may be taken as the commonly received law on the subject of the duties of each caste: "For the sake of preserving the universe, the Being supremely glorious allotted separate duties to those who sprang respectively from his mouth, his arm, his thigh, and his foot. To Brāhmans he assigned the duties of reading and teaching, of sacrificing, of assisting others to sacrifice, of giving alms, and of receiving gifts. To defend the people, to give alms, to sacrifice, to read, to shun the allurements of sexual gratification, are in a few words the duties of a Kshatriya. To keep herds of cattle, to bestow largesses, to sacrifice, to read the Scriptures, to carry on trade, to lend at interest, are the duties of a Vaishya. One principal duty the Supreme Ruler assigns to a Sudra, viz. to serve the before-mentioned classes, without depreciating their worth." * This may be taken as the typical teaching of the Hindu Scriptures on the subject, and the phraseology of other books is made, as far as possible, to harmonize with it.

* Manu's "Dharma Sāstra."

The Brāhman being the first-born, having sprung from the mouth of the Supreme, and being the rightful possessor of the Veda, is the chief of the whole creation. The birth of a Brāhman is said to be an incarnation of Dharma (religion). Whatever exists is the wealth of the Brāhman, since he is entitled to all by his primogeniture and pre-eminence; and it is through his benevolence that other mortals enjoy life. His ideal inherent qualities are quiescence, self-control, devotion, purity, patience, rectitude, secular and sacred knowledge, the recognition of spiritual existence and the disposition to serve Brahmā. The Brāhman is the first-born by nature, the twice-born by the sacrament of investiture with the sacred thread, the deity on earth by his divine status.

According to the same scripture, the Brāhman is superior to law, even to moral law, when it clashes with his worldly interests; and though it is disgraceful for him to be a hired servant, he may without hesitation take the property of a Sudra. The gradations of punishment for offences according to the caste of the offender is most startling to one trained under just and equitable laws; *e.g.* a priest shall be fined five hundred (panas) if he slander a Kshatriya, twenty-five if he slander a Vaishya, twelve only if he slander a Sudra. In like manner a crime against a man of his own caste by a Sudra is a venial offence; but a similar offence committed against a man of a higher caste is proportionally greater. And should a Sudra through pride venture to give instructions to priests concerning their duty, let the king order hot oil to be dropped into his mouth and ears. An adulterer of the Brāhman class might suffer the loss of his hair; but a similar offender, if a Sudra, must forfeit his life. Whatever a

Brāhman's offence, the king must on no account put him to death; he may, at the most, banish him, allowing him to take his property with him. Further, in case of wrong-doing against him, a Brāhman need not have recourse to the civil power, but is free to take vengeance upon the offender.

It will be borne in mind that the books in which their order is so exalted were written by the Brāhmans themselves, in which stories are found to lead the people to believe in the superhuman, and in some cases super-divine, power of some of their number. Brihaspati is said to have reduced the moon to a cinder; Visvakarma cut off the hands and feet of the sun; and Manu seems to acknowledge the truthfulness of these narratives, as he says, "Who without perishing could provoke those holy men by whom the all-devouring fire was created, the sea with waters not drinkable, and the moon with its wane and increase? What prince could gain wealth by opposing those, who, if angry, could frame other worlds, and regents of worlds, and could give being to new gods and mortals? What man, desirous of life, would injure those by the aid of whom worlds and gods perpetually exist?" The following lines sum up the popular idea of the power of the Brāhman:—

"The whole world is under the power of the gods.
The gods are under the power of the mantras (sacred texts used by Brāhmans);
The mantras are under the power of the Brāhmans.
The Brāhman is therefore our god."

As a deterrent from injuring a Brāhman, and as an inducement to bestow gifts upon him, the following texts are inserted in Manu: "A man who basely assaults a Brāhman, with an intention to hurt him, shall be whirled about for a century in a hell called Tāmisri;

but having smitten him in anger and by design, even with a blade of grass, he shall be born in one-and-twenty transmigrations from the wombs of impure animals." "If a man sell his cow he will go to hell; if he give her to a Brāhman he will go to heaven." "If on Gangā's (the river Ganges) anniversary whole villages be given to Brāhmans, the person presenting them will acquire all the merit that can be obtained; his body will be a million times more glorious than the sun, he will have a million virgins, many carriages, and palanquins with jewels, and he will live in heaven with his father as many years as there are particles in the land given."

The authority for the almost divine honours, which are paid by the more superstitious of the people, is found in such passages as the following, from the more recent Purānas: "Whatever good man bows to a Brāhman, reverencing him as Vishnu, is blessed with long life, sons, renown, and prosperity. But whatever foolish man does not bow down to a Brāhman on earth, Kesava (Vishnu) desires to strike off his head with his discus. Whosoever bears but a drop of water which has been in contact with a Brāhman's foot, all the sins of his body are immediately destroyed. Whosoever carries on his head the holy things touched by a Brāhman's foot is freed from all sins."

The Brāhmans, though thus highly favoured, had not a position of idleness. According to Manu, their life was divided into four parts, in each of which there were special duties for them to discharge. They are as follows:—

The first order is that of a Brahmāchāri, or pupil. In this the boy is to reverence and pay attention to his instructor. His religious exercises must commence with the dawn, and, excepting the times appointed for

eating and study, must be continued throughout the day. He has many duties assigned to him, and is ordered to abstain from various luxuries, in order that his mind may be free to study. Before the invention of writing, it was in this stage that the young men learned the sacred books, which in their turn they had to teach others.

The second order is that of the Ghrihastha, or householder. He enters this when he has chosen, or has had chosen for him, a wife, whose qualities are carefully described. He must live with her in the strictest fidelity, give her elegant attire, seek to raise up a family, or, at any rate, to have one son, without whom, natural or adopted, his salvation cannot be effected. He has to practise many minute and burdensome rites and ceremonies, such as the offering of oblations to fire, the presentation of food to spirits through living beings, the entertainment of guests, and the offering of water and rice to the manes of his ancestors. At the Shrāddhas, or ceremonies performed for the benefit of the departed, he has to avoid intercourse with any who may be diseased, or ceremonially unclean, or who may be following pursuits forbidden to Brāhmans. During the feast his mind must be in perfect composure, or the food would fail to benefit the one for whom it was intended, and he must read for the edification of the guests from various Hindu scriptures. His mode of life is carefully marked out for him. He must not have long nails or beard; he must neither eat with his wife, nor see her eat; he must keep his passions under control. He must not sing, dance, or play with dice. He must carefully observe all religious festivals. Moral duties, too, are carefully ordered, and as the touch of a person ceremonially unclean or of a low caste man is polluting,

in addition to the positive duties of his calling, he has to be on his guard lest defilement come through others.

The third order is that of the Vānaprastha, *i.e.* the hermit. When he enters this order his self-denial must be greater than in that of either the student or householder. At the approach of old age he must leave his family and worldly affairs, feed on herbs, fruits, and roots only. He must be constantly engaged in the reading of the Vedas, or engaged in acts of penance, many of which are painful and injurious to health, as the following will show. In the hot season let him expose himself to five fires; in the rains let him stand uncovered where the clouds pour the heaviest showers; in the cold season (when the evaporation caused by the dry air is excessive) let him wear damp clothes; and let him increase by degrees the severity of his austerities. Abandoning the use of all means of gratification, let him engage in meditation, for if he is attacked by disease through the use of these means, his soul will unite with the Divine Spirit, and his troubles be over for ever.

The fourth order is that of the Sanyāsi, or anchorite. For those in this class even more severe austerities are enjoined, but their chief employment is meditating on the Supreme Spirit. They must wander from place to place, asking but one meal a day, giving pain to no living being. Realizing the identity of their spirit with that of the Supreme, they are ready to leave the cumbersome and miserable body, and obtain absorption into Deity.

Dr. Wilson adds, "The profession of the Brāhmans, that with certain non-essential modifications they have still this sacred character, and that they follow these injunctions esteemed divine, gives them a powerful hold

upon the mind of India, quite independently of their pretensions to pre-eminence through their origin from Brahmā's mouth. With Brāhmanical discipline and pursuits there is real sympathy even on the part of large portions of the community who are legally debarred from participating in them. There is an admiration and approval of the Brāhman among the people, as well as dread and distrust of him, and contempt for his extravagant claims. Hence the attempt, in late centuries especially, of multitudes precluded from priestly service, to become wandering saints, and devotees of various orders and grades. There is very great deference shown to the Brāhman even in view of the fact that he is now left without the legal remedy for enforcing on his own behalf the unjust laws which he has made connected with his life, honour, and support. I add another observation. I have a strong impression that a great deal of the Brāhmanical legislation was from the first intended only for effect, and that it was never designed to be carried into execution as far as the priestly practice itself was concerned." In harmony with this last suggestion is the opinion of a native writer in the *Calcutta Review:* * "Those who arrogate to themselves great honours must at least profess to be guided by a more elevated standard of duty than their neighbours. A man who prides himself on the greatness of his origin must admit that it behoves him to observe higher principles of morality than those over whom he affects superiority. The Brāhmans have accordingly laid down severe rules for the government of their order. Whether the authors of the Sāstras intended that their austere rules should be followed out in practice, or whether they merely proposed to exhibit their idea of priestly

* *Calcutta Review*, 1851, p. 53.

dignity without intending to realize it, it is not easy to determine. One thing, however, is certain, that as the Brāhman acknowledged no earthly superior, he had little apprehension of his delinquencies being severely visited. He could not be called to account for departing from his maxims, because no one was at liberty to judge him. An austere rule of life could therefore prove no greater restraint on his inclinations than he himself chose to allow."

We now pass on to notice the position of the second great caste. The Kshatriya is held to have been produced from the *arms* of Brahmā, and is described as the dispenser of justice, particularly as the one whose duty it is to punish offenders, the civil power to whose tender mercies the Brāhmans could hand over law-breakers. He it is who has to see that the various castes attend to their prescribed duties ; but in doing this work he must abide by the decisions of the Brāhmans. He must cultivate humility, and is warned by the example of kings, who, through the absence of this virtue, have been ruined. He is enjoined to seek sacred and secular knowledge from the Brāhmans, and to avoid various kinds of immorality and sensuality. Of his ministers, some are to be versed in the art of war, some in the doctrines of religion. He should have for a wife a woman of his own caste, and appoint a domestic purahit, or priest, and be liberal in his gifts to the Brāhmans, for "an offering in the mouth of a Brāhman is far better than offerings to holy fires ; it never drops, or dries, or is consumed." In battle he must be brave, resolute, and generous ; but at the same time self-preservation is carefully taught. "Against misfortune let him preserve his wealth, at the expense of his wealth let him preserve his wife, but at all events let him preserve himself,

even at the hazard of his wife and riches." This latter instruction has been embodied by Brāhmans in the following proverb:

> "Preserve your wife, preserve your pelf,
> But give them both to save yourself;
> There's other wealth, another wife,
> But where is there another life?"

His duties for morn, noon, and night are carefully prescribed; nothing that he can have to do but he will find definite instruction given concerning it: the men to form his army; the time and manner of march; how to attack, and how to defend, and the method of dealing with a conquered foe. When unable to attend to his state duties himself, he is advised to appoint a Brāhman substitute: and if at any time he is in need of advice, it is to the Brāhman that he must turn. The king is the guardian of all property; all treasure trove is to be divided equally between him and the Brāhmans; and whilst all wealth that may be left by any of the other castes dying intestate, goes to the king, the Brāhmans claim what was so left by Brāhmans. Sir W. Jones says of the legislation, by which the members of the several castes are to be guided, that it is "a system of despotism and priestcraft, both indeed limited by law, but artfully conspiring to give mutual support, though with mutual checks. There is one important statement respecting the effect of punishment by a king. "Men who have committed crimes, and have received from kings the punishment due to them, go to heaven pure, and become as clean as those who have done well." "This dictum," says Dr. Wilson, "which removes man from his responsibility to God, has taken a great hold of the popular mind of India. Native musicians attend the capital executions of the vilest criminals throughout

the country, seeking to introduce them into the other world with joy and rejoicing, simply because they view their death by the public sentence of the law as an atonement for all their transgressions."

The third of the chief castes is the Vaishya. This comprises the merchant, agriculturalist, and keeper of cattle. This caste, springing from the thigh of Brahmā, is naturally inferior both to the Brāhman and Kshatriya. After performing the initiatory sacraments, ending with that of receiving the sacrificial thread, and marrying a wife, he should be attentive to his own proper work, which is chiefly that of keeping cattle; for God has committed cattle to Vaishya's care, as He has committed men to the care of the Brāhman and Kshatriya. He must study the various branches of the subjects which tend to make him a good farmer or merchant.

The fourth class is the Sudra, or servant's caste, which is said to have sprung from the feet of Brahmā. As the Sudra has been created especially to minister to the comfort of the three higher castes, of course his duty lies in doing anything and everything that will in any way tend to their well-being. He is spoken of as a slave, his property, as well as his person, being at the disposal of his master. His religious degradation, too, is complete. According to Manu, a Brāhman is forbidden to give advice or even food to a Sudra, for the ghî having been offered to the gods, must not be eaten by him. Further, the Brāhman must not give "spiritual counsel to him," nor inform him of the legal expiation of his sin. He who declares the law to a servile man, and he who instructs him in the mode of expiating sin, sinks with that very man into hell. A Brāhman should never be the guru of a Sudra. "While the first part of a Brāhman's name should indicate holiness, that of a Kshatriya's

power, and that of a Vaishya's wealth, that of a Sudra should indicate contempt. The Veda is never to be read in the presence of a Sudra, and for him no sacrifice is to be performed. He has no business with solemn rites."

The privileges of a Sudra are very limited. He must not marry a woman of the higher castes, or their offspring will sink into a class even lower than his own. He must not aid in carrying the corpse of a Brāhman, even of his own master, that obstructions to the dead man's entrance into heaven may not result. He is allowed to carry his dead only through the southern gate of the city where he may live. His morals are not to be strictly looked after. The murder of a Sudra by a Brāhman is equal only to killing a cat, or a frog, or a crow. "Servile attendance on the Brāhmans, chiefly on such as keep house, and are famed for virtue, is of itself the highest duty of a Sudra, and leads him to future beatitude. Pure, humbly serving the higher classes, sweet in speech, never arrogant, ever seeking refuge in the Brāhmans, he may attain the highest class" in another birth.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE GROWTH OF CASTE.

HAVING sketched the peculiarities of the four chief castes as described in the Law Books, a few quotations from other sacred books, in chronological order, will now be given, so that some idea may be formed of the growth of this elaborate system. Dr. Muir,* reviewing various texts on this subject, says, "First, we have accounts in which the four castes are said to have sprung from progenitors who were separately created; but in regard to the manner of their creation we find the greatest diversity of statement. The most common story is that they issued from the mouth, arms, thighs, and feet of Purusha, or Brahmā. The oldest extant passage in which this idea occurs, and from which the later myths of a similar tenor have no doubt been borrowed, is to be found in the Purusha Sūkta; but it is doubtful whether, in the form in which it is there represented, it is anything more than an allegory. In some of the texts from the Bhāgavata Purāna traces of the same allegorical character may be perceived; but in Manu and the Purānas the mystical import of the Vedic text disappears, and the figurative narration is hardened into a literal statement of fact. In the chapters of the Vishnu, Vāyu, and

* "Old Sanskrit Texts," vol. i. p. 159.

Mārkandeya Purānas, where castes are described as coeval with creation, and as having been naturally distinguished by different *gunas*, or qualities, involving varieties of moral character, we are nevertheless allowed to infer that those qualities exerted no influence on the classes in which they were inherent, as the condition of the whole race during the Krita age is described as one of uniform perfection and happiness; while the actual separation into castes did not take place, according to the Vāyu Purāna, until men had become deteriorated in the Treta age.

"Second, in various passages from these Brāhmanas, epic poems, and Purānas, the creation of mankind is described without the least allusion to any separate production of the progenitors of the four castes. And whilst in the chapters where they relate the distinct formations of the castes, the Purānas assign different natural dispositions to each class, they elsewhere represent all mankind as being at the creation uniformly distinguished by the quality of passion. In one text men are said to be the offspring of Vivasat; in another his son Manu is said to be their progenitor, whilst in a third they are said to be descended from a female of the same name. The passage which declares Manu to have been the father of the human race explicitly affirms that men of all the four castes were descended from him. In another remarkable text the Mahābhārata categorically asserts that originally there was no distinction of classes, the existing distribution having arisen out of differences of character and occupation. In these circumstances we may fairly conclude that the separate origination of four castes was far from being an article of belief universally received by Indian antiquity."

The first quotation is from the Purusha Sūkta, one of

the latest additions to the Rig Veda. This is believed to be the "oldest extant passage which makes mention of the fourfold origin of the Hindu race," and, as noticed above, has more the character of poetry than of history. "When (the gods) divided Purusha, into how many parts did they cut him up? What was his mouth? What (his) arms? What his thighs and feet? The Brāhman was his mouth, the Rajanya (Kshatriya) was his arms, the Vaisya was his thighs, the Sūdra sprang from his feet." In the Satapata Brāhmana another poetical account is given of the origin of the three castes—viz., that they sprang from the Vedas. "This entire (universe) has been created by Brahmā. Men say that the Vaishya class was produced from the Rich-Verses. They say that the Yajur Veda is the womb from which the Kshatriyas were born. The Sāma Veda is the source from which the Brāhmans sprang. This word the ancients declared to the ancients."

The Vishnu Purāna makes the distinction of castes to be the result of character. In answer to a question as to how they arose, the sage Parāsara replied, "When, true to his design, Brahmā became desirous to create the world, creatures in whom goodness prevailed sprang from his mouth; others, in whom passion predominated, came from his breast; others, in whom both passion and darkness were strong, proceeded from his thighs; others he created from his feet, whose chief characteristic was darkness."

The Vāyu Purāna teaches that a thousand pairs of these different castes were formed at once. "As Brahmā, desirous to create, was meditating upon offspring, he created from his mouth a thousand couples of living beings who were born with an abundance of goodness, and full of intelligence. He then created another

thousand from his breast; they abounded in passion, and were both vigorous and destitute of vigour. After creating from his thighs another thousand pairs, in whom both passion and darkness prevailed, and who are described as active, he formed from his feet yet another thousand couples, who were full of darkness, inglorious, and of little vigour." In another text this Purāna affirms that in the Krita age, which answers to the golden age of the Greeks, "there were no distinctions of castes or orders!" "These perfect beings, who were described as existing formerly in the Krita age . . . . who were tranquil, fiery, active, or distressed, were born again in the Treta age as Brāhmans, Kshatriyas, Vaisyas, Sudras." "Svayambhu (the self-existent) established divisions amongst (men) according to their tendencies. Those who were rapacious he ordained to be Kshatriyas, protectors of the others. Those who attended on these, fearless, speaking the truth, and propounding sacred knowledge with exactness (were made) Brāhmans. Those who had previously been feeble, engaged in slaughter, and cultivators of the ground, he made Vaisyas; and he designated as Sudras those who grieved, and were addicted to menial tasks." From this it would appear the writer believed that originally there was no distinction of caste; but owing to their character and conduct in later years men were subdivided by Brahmā. These contradictory statements are explained as referring to the commencement of things in successive kalpas, or ages; for at the end of each kalpa all created things are destroyed, and at the commencement of each, a new creation takes place. Professor Wilson suggests that they have been borrowed from different original authorities.

The Rāmāyana teaches that the four castes were the

offspring of a *woman* named Manu, the wife of Kasyapa, a son of Brahmā. The Mahābhārata contains self-contradictory statements on this subject. In some texts the prerogatives of the Brāhmans are described in the style, and almost in the identical language of Manu. In another place, Mahadeva, addressing his spouse, says, "A man, whether he be a Brāhman, Kshatriya, Vaisya, or Sudra, is such by nature;" and "if a higher caste man acts as a lower, he will be born again as the lower; whilst one who, in the lower, acts as those in the higher, he will be born into the higher, *i.e.*, that in life no real change of caste can be effected." And in another passage the sage Bhrigu says, "This world, having been created by Brāhma entirely Brāhmanic, became (afterwards) separated into castes in consequence of works."

From a careful study of the older books, Dr. Muir draws the following conclusion: "In general the authors of the hymns of the Rig Veda regarded the whole of the Āryan people, embracing not only the priests and chiefs, but the middle classes of the population, as descended from a common father, or ancestor, whom they designate by the name of Manu. This reference to a common progenitor excludes, of course, the supposition that the writers by whom it is made could have had any belief of the myth which became afterwards current among their countrymen—that their nation consisted of four castes, differing naturally in dignity, and separately made by Brahmā. . . . It will, I think, be found on investigation that not only the older hymns, but the great bulk of the hymns, supply no distinct evidence of the existence of a well-defined and developed caste system at the time when they were composed." *

* "Old Sanskrit Texts," vol. i. p. 239.

The growth of the caste system is difficult to trace with anything approaching certainty, at the same time, successive pictures of the life of the people enable us to see something of the great changes that were in progress. The root brahma signifies hymn or prayer; "the term Brāhman must therefore, as we conclude, have been ordinarily applied (1) to the same persons who are spoken of elsewhere in the hymns as Rishi, Kavi (poet), etc., and have denoted devout worshippers and contemplative sages who composed prayers and hymns, which they themselves recited in praise of the gods. Afterwards, when the ceremonial gradually became more complicated, and a division of sacred functions took place, the word was more ordinarily employed (2) for a minister of public worship, and at length came to signify (3) one particular kind of priest with special duties." * Dr. Muir cites a number of passages in which the word Brāhman is used in these three senses, and others in which giving presents to the Brāhmans is encouraged, and concludes that "it will remain certain that the Brāhman, whether we look upon him as a sage or poet, or as an officiating priest, or in both capacities, was regarded with respect and reverence, and even that his presence had begun to be considered as an important condition of the efficacy of the ceremonial." "While, however, there thus appears to be every reason for supposing that towards the close of the Vedic period the priesthood had become a profession, the texts quoted (excepting that from the Purusha Sūkta) do not contain anything which necessarily implies that the priests formed an exclusive caste, or at least a caste separated from all others by insurmountable barriers, as in later times." In the Vedic age some who were not Brāhmans

* "Old Sanskrit Texts," p. 243.

composed hymns and exercised priestly functions. In later times, lest those of the lower castes should encroach upon their preserves, legends were invented to show that these men had, by miraculous means, been first made Brāhmans, and then allowed to perform the duties peculiar to that privileged caste. From other hymns it is evident that Brāhmans intermarried with women of the other classes, taking the widows, and in some cases the wives, of men still living; and the terms in which the evils of interference with the Brāhman's rights and privileges are described show a decided tendency to growth in strength and bitterness.

Dr. Roth's opinion on the subject is as follows: "The religious development of India is attached through the course of three thousand years to the word brăhmă. This conception might be taken as the standard for estimating the progress of thought directed to divine things, as at every step taken it has gained a new form; while at the same time it has always embraced in itself the highest spiritual acquisition of the nation. The original signification of the word brahma in the Vedic hymns, is that of prayer; not praise or thanksgiving, but that invocation which, with the force of the will directed to God, seeks to draw Him to itself, and to receive satisfaction from Him. From this oldest sense and form of brahma was formed the masculine noun brahmā, which was the designation of those who pronounced the prayers, or performed the sacred ceremonies; and in nearly all the passages of the Rig Veda, in which it was thought that this word must refer to the Brāhmanical caste, this more extended sense must be substituted for the more limited one. From this sense of the word brahmā nothing was more natural than to convert this offerer of prayer into a particular

description of the sacrificial priest: so soon as the ritual began to be fixed, the functions which were before united in a single person, who both prayed to the gods and sacrificed to them, became separated, and a priesthood interposed itself between man and God." *

"In many places of the liturgical and legal books, the promise of every blessing is attached to the maintenance of a priest by the king. Inasmuch as he supports and honours the priest, the latter ensures to him the favour of the gods. So it was that the caste of the Brāhmans arose and attained to power and consideration: first, they were the domestic priests of the kings; then the dignity became hereditary in certain families; finally a union, occasioned by similarity of interests of these families in one larger community, was effected; and all this in reciprocal action with the progress made in other respects by theological doctrine and religious worship. Still the extension of the power which fell into the hands of this priestly caste would not be perfectly comprehensible from this explanation alone. The relation of spiritual superiority in which the priests came to stand to the kings was aided by other historical movements. When at a period more recent than the majority of the hymns of the Rig Veda, as the Vedic people, driven by some political shock, advanced from their abode in the Panjāb, further and further to the south, drove the aborigines into the hills, and took possession of the broad tract of country lying between the Ganges, the Jumna, and the Vindhya range, the time had arrived when the distribution of power, the relation of king and priest, could become transformed in the most rapid and comprehensive manner. In principalities separated in such various ways, such a division into tribes as had

* "Old Sanskrit Texts," vol. i. p. 289.

existed in the Panjāb was no longer possible where nature had created a wide and continuous tract, with scarcely any natural boundaries to dissever one part from another. Most of the petty princes who had descended from the north must of necessity disappear, their tribes become dissolved, and contests arise for the supreme dominion. This era is perhaps portrayed to us in the principal subject of the Mahābhārata, the contest between the descendants of Pāndu and Kuru. In this stage of disturbance and complication, power naturally fell into the hands of those who did not directly possess any authority; the priestly races and their leaders, who had hitherto stood rather in the position of followers of the kings, now rose to a higher rank. It may easily be supposed that they and their families, already honoured as the confidential followers of the princes, would frequently be able to strike a decisive stroke to which the king would owe his success. If we take further into account the intellectual and moral influence which this class possessed in virtue of the prerogative conceded to or usurped by them, and the religious feelings of the people, it is not difficult to comprehend how, in such a period of transition, powerful communities should arise amongst the domestic priests of petty kings, and their families should attain to the highest importance in every department of life, and should grow into a caste, which, like the ecclesiastical orders of the middle ages of Christianity, began to look upon secular authority as an effluence from the fulness of their power to be conferred at their will; and how, on the other hand, the numerous royal families should sink down into a nobility which possessed, indeed, the sole right to the kingly dignity, but at the same time, when elected by the people, required inauguration in order to their

recognition by the priesthood, and were enjoined above all things to employ only Brāhmans as their counsellors." Dr. Roth goes on to speak of the three highest castes as being altogether different from the fourth, in that the latter were not permitted to sacrifice or to know the Vedas: the supposition being well founded that the Sudras were not originally part of the Hindu system, but were engrafted into it, and were probably composed either of the descendants of a previous migration, or were the aborigines of the country, to which the Hindus came.

The position assumed by the Brāhmans was not obtained without severe struggles against the Kshatriyas, whom they sought to subordinate. The following text from Manu is the root from which many legends, found in more recent books, have grown. "Let the king constantly reverence ancient Brāhmans skilled in the Vedas and pure in conduct; for he who always respects the aged is honoured even by Rākshasas. Let him, even though humble-minded, be continually learning submissiveness from them: for a submissive monarch never perishes. Through want of this character many kings have been destroyed with all their possessions. Vena perished through want of submissiveness, and King Nahusha, and Sūdas the son of Pijavana, and Samukha, and Nimi. But through submissiveness Prithu and Manu attained kingly power, Varuna the lordship of wealth, and the son of Gadhi Brāhmanhood." An outline of these stories will show how respect for the Brāhmans is inculcated.

Vena, the grandson of Mrithu (death), was, like him, of a corrupt nature. When he was inaugurated as king he forbade his people to sacrifice to the gods, declaring that he was the rightful recipient of offerings.

The Rishis entreated him to recall this dreadful order, promising that he should have a share of the sacrifices. Vena, waxing more arrogant, asked, "Who are the gods? They are all present in a king's person; he is composed of all the gods." As the king would not hearken, each Muni took a blade of sacred grass and smote him with it. They then rubbed his thigh and produced from it a hideous black being, who became the progenitor of the Nishādas, and thus the evil of the king was extracted. They then rubbed his right hand, and a glorious son named Prithu was the result, who showed great respect to the Brāhmans.

Nahusha was a powerful king, who, intoxicated with pride, made Brāhmans carry him on their shoulders. At length his arrogance becoming intolerable, a sage named Agastya was placed amongst the bearers. As the holy men were proceeding with their load, the monarch touched him with his foot, whereupon the sage cried out, "Fall, thou serpent." Immediately the proud monarch, who had, by his austerities, raised himself to the position of king of the gods, was changed into a serpent, and continued in that form until he was released by Yudhisthira, the righteous king.

Nimi requested a Rishi to celebrate a sacrifice for him which was to last a thousand years; but the Brāhman being already engaged for five hundred years, promised to come at the expiration of that period. Nimi, anxious to proceed, engaged another priest. At the expiration of the five hundred years the Brāhman to whom the king had first spoken, incensed at the slight that had been shown him by the engagement of another priest without consulting him, said, "Let Nimi be deprived of his body."

The story of the quarrel between Visishtha, a Brāhman

sage, and Visvamitra, figures very largely in Hindu legend. Briefly, it is as follows: One day the Kshatriya king, Visvamitra, visited the hermitage of Visishtha, by whom he was entertained in a right royal manner, and was surprised to find that the bountiful provision, of which he and his followers had partaken, had been given by a wonder-working cow which belonged to the hermit. King-like, Visvamitra wished for her, offered a million other cows, or even his kingdom in exchange, but the Brāhman steadily refused to yield his treasure. The king tried to drive her away, but she would not move. The cow asked her owner if it was his wish for her to go, otherwise no power could move her. The Brāhman, intimating that he had no wish to part with her, her appearance suddenly changed, and the calm and quiet cow became a powerful army, which put the king's troops to flight. The king immediately gave up his opposition, and betook himself to prayer, meditation, and asceticism, by virtue of which, in process of time, he obtained the coveted position of Brāhmanhood." Marvellous stories are told of the fervour of Visvamitra's austerity. On one occasion Dharma (religion), assuming the form of Visishtha, visited the ascetic and asked for food. The man brought it, and Dharma then told him to wait a little. Returning at the close of a hundred years, and finding him still standing there, he said: "I am pleased with thee, O Brāhman rishi;" by which the desired effect was accomplished, and the Kshatriya became a Brāhman.

Visvamitra, thus raised to the position of a Brāhman, is regarded as the author of many Vedic hymns, and, chief of all, the mysterious, awe-inspiring Gāyatri. This change of caste has greatly perplexed the later exponents of Hinduism. How was it possible? In

the early days the rules which prescribed the duties of each were not so carefully drawn as in later times. Probably at that time the Brāhman and the Kshatriya alike performed priestly functions; but in after years, when the Brāhmans claimed an exclusive right to perform the duties of priest and teacher, it was found inconvenient to have one so prominent as the Kshatriya Visvamitra in their religious history, and the acknowledged author of their most sacred hymns. Hence the idea was started, and legends invented to substantiate it, that this man, by means of protracted and intense religious fervour, gained admission into the privileged class. For in a work later than the Vedas, but older than the Purānas, it is stated that a Brāhman must officiate at sacrifices that only a Kshatriya can offer. In the Markandeya Purāna is an interesting story of king Harischandra, who offended a Rishi, and of the sufferings he had to endure in consequence. The king, hearing the cry of a woman in distress, and being bound as a Kshatriya, to redress human wrongs, uttered an imprecation which aroused the anger of the sage. Harischandra, grieved and terrified, offered most costly gifts. The sage demanded everything but the king's person, his son, his wife, and his virtue. All being given, and the king and queen having put on the ascetic dress, the sage demanded a fee for offering the sacrifice thus presented. As the king had only his son and wife left, he set off to Benāres, hoping to find a "city of refuge" in that holy place, but his relentless creditor was there to meet him. The king sold his wife, but the money he received for her was too small a gift for the savage priest. Then Harischandra sold himself to a Chandāla (one of the most degraded and despised castes), who sent him into graveyards to steal clothes from the dead.

For a whole year the king followed this dreadful occupation, when his wife came there to burn her son's body. They talked over their miseries, and determined to end them by burning themselves with their child's corpse. As they were about to carry their purpose into effect, Dharma (religion) appeared, and told the king that he had assumed the form of the cruel Chandāla to try the faith of his servant, and that, being pleased with his readiness to suffer and die rather than fail to fulfil his vow, husband and wife ascend to heaven with a divine escort, and are richly rewarded for their painful service.

In Parusarāma, Vishnu is said to have become incarnate to destroy the Kshatriya race, and that he again and again almost succeeded in the attempt. These legends show clearly that the Brāhmans were not suffered to attain to almost divine superiority without a contest.

The following story from the Mahābhārata shows the impossibility of any from a lower caste gaining entrance into a higher. A man named Matanga, the reputed son of a Brāhman, was riding in a car drawn by asses. As he pricked the nose of one the mother comforted her suffering son with the remark, "Be not distressed, it is a Chandāla who is in the car. A Brāhman is kind, how can he smite any one? This wicked man indicates his origin by his cruelty, for it is birth which determines the character." Hearing these words, Matanga asked what the ass meant by casting reflections on his birth. She assured him that he was no Brāhman's son, but that his mother, in a state of intoxication, had received the embraces of a barber. Returning home, he commenced a course of such severe penance that the gods in fright extracted from Indra the promise of a boon for the devotee. He asked to be made a Brāhman, but this

Indra refused. For a hundred years more Matanga continued his austerity, but Indra again refused him, and told him that a "Chandāla can only become a Sūdra in a thousand births, a Sūdra a Vaisya after a period thirty times as long, a Vaisya a Rājanya (Kshatriya) after a period sixty times the length, a Rājanya a Brāhman after a further period of sixty thousand lives."

Concerning people not included in these four castes, such as the aborigines whom the Hindus found in India, and the inhabitants of countries bordering on their own, Manu has little to say. He affirms that "the members of three castes, the Brāhman, Kshatriya, and Vaisya, are twice-born; the fourth, the Sūdra, once-born; there is no fifth." All others are outcastes. He enumerates a number of such tribes, and gives their pedigree, showing that they are the descendants of some who were once within the bounds of the Hindu castes. They have sunk to their low condition from the fact that their parents did not marry members of their own caste. The common name Dasyas (slaves) is applied to them all, and it is taught that they ought to respect the Brāhmanical institutions. In the Vishnu Purāna is a story in harmony with Manu's teaching. Sāgara, the son of a king in exile, raised an army and recovered his paternal estate. When he was about to exterminate his foes, they applied to Vasishtha, his family priest, for protection, who interceded with the king, saying, "You have done enough, my son, in the way of pursuing these men, who are as good as dead. I have compelled them to abandon the duties of caste and all association with the twice-born." Sāgara compelled them to alter their costume. He made the Yavans shave their heads, the Sakas shave half their heads, the Pāradas to wear long hair, and the Pahlavas beards. These and other

Kshatriyas he deprived of the study of the Vedas, in consequence of which, and of their desertion by the Brāhmans, they became Mlechhas, or outcastes. From this and similar stories the writers evidently imagined that the people inhabiting the neighbouring countries were once part of their own nation, who through their wickedness lost their position as members of one or other of the four great castes.

## CHAPTER III.

### CASTE AS IT NOW EXISTS.

HAVING noticed what the sacred books have to say concerning caste, we have now to describe it as it is seen at the present time. There are those who affirm that it never existed in the form there indicated; that the scriptural account is largely imaginary. This may to some extent be true; but that there was an approximate realization of it, there can be little doubt.

In Bengal there are virtually only two of the original castes, viz., Brāhmans and Sūdras. The Brāhmans are subdivided into an immense number of classes, some of whom will not eat or intermarry with others. The Kshatriyas are almost extinct, though in other parts of India are many who profess to be such. This is true of the Vaisyas also; whilst many of those known as Sūdras are the descendants of some of the mixed classes. It was a peculiarity of this system, the object of which was to prevent the intermarriage of the classes, that the children of such mesalliances did not enjoy the position even of the lower-caste parent, whether father or mother, but sank below both. In civilized countries the wife, whether nobler or baser, takes the rank of her husband; but this was not the case in India. The heaviest penalties were paid by the children when a woman married a man of a different caste.

But this has been changed. In the present day those who contract these forbidden marriages themselves suffer. Perhaps one fruitful cause of mixed marriages in former times was the fact that in addition to the proper form of marriage others were recognized ; the one called the *Gandharva* rite, where two people, mutually willing, might live as man and wife without any ceremony ; the other, the *Rākshasa* rite, by which victors in war were at liberty to appropriate to themselves the women of the vanquished.

At present most of the well-to-do Hindus of Bengal belong to the Vaidya and Kāyastha castes. These are now reckoned as Sūdras, though, according to Manu, the former was the offspring of a Brāhman father and Vaishya mother ; the latter, the offspring of a Vaishya father with a Sūdra mother.

The supremacy of the Brāhman remains. In many places the people regard him as little less than divine. It should, however, be understood that all Brāhmans never were, nor are now, priests. Some Brāhman families have for generations acted as priests in the temples, in the palaces of kings, and in the homes of rich people, but these are regarded by their fellow-Brāhmans with contempt. It is not because of his office as priest, but by reason of his birth, that a Brāhman obtains the adoration of the people. The guru, who is not necessarily a Brāhman, is reverenced by his disciples because of his position. But when the office of guru is superadded to the birthright of Brāhmanhood, no class have greater reverence shown to them by their fellows. As a Brāhman walks through the streets low-caste people account it an honour to take the dust from his feet and place it upon their head, and even to drink the water in which his feet have been washed. This is

through fear of his curse, and his supposed influence over the gods.

In some cases the four stages of a Brāhman's ideal life, as prescribed in the Law Books, are observed. He passes through the student, householder, meditative, and ascetic periods; but this is by no means general. A modification of the scheme is commonly seen. Brāhmans, when growing old and infirm, hand over their property to their heirs, and go to Benāres, Gāya, or some other holy place to await their end. The old idea that it is derogatory to the dignity of a Brāhman to sell his services has given way to the pressure of circumstances, and men wearing the *poitra* are engaged as clerks, schoolmasters, physicians, engineers, and shopkeepers. The pundits admit that the proper work of the Brāhman does not pay in this degenerate age, as the Vishnu Purāna predicted. In the towns, at any rate, they can violate with impunity almost every law laid down for their guidance by Manu; though in country places, where superstition is stronger, it is necessary for them to be more careful. Each caste in a district has its *dal*, or committee, presided over by its dalapati, or president, to whose judgment the members are bound to submit; and when any violation of the rules of the caste are reported, the dal considers the matter, and, if it is proved, sentence is pronounced, which must be endured, or the delinquent is put out of caste, *i.e.* the members "boycott" him. They will neither visit him nor eat with him; nor will they allow their sons to intermarry with his family. This social ostracism is a severe punishment.

Some of these dals are very strict in the observance of their caste restrictions, some are lax. In cities like Calcutta, some allow their members openly to disregard

rules that at no distant date were rigorously observed, and which are still binding amongst those who are not much influenced by European ideas. Nowadays a man may eat beef, drink wine, wear shoes made of cowhide, sit at table with Europeans, without losing his position in society. I know gentlemen who are regarded as orthodox—at any rate are not excommunicated—who visit Europeans, eating and drinking with them. In country districts I have partaken of roast beef in a Hindu gentleman's house, where a Mahomedan cook was kept; the Brāhman host sitting with me at the table. Public dinners are given in European hotels where Hindu gentlemen of various castes publicly partake of food together. Young men who ventured to cross the sea were, on their return to India, subjected to severe penance to purify them from contact with the despised Mlechhas; but the process of purification has been considerably modified. The Hindus found that by outcasting those who had gone to England to qualify for good positions in their own country, they were losing men who were an honour to their nation; and so a way was made by which they could be retained. With the exception of a few of the more orthodox dals, Hindus may do almost anything except receive Christian baptism. That still involves separation from the community, although learned pundits have declared that they could find no law against it in their Scriptures.

In some cases the power of the dal is superior to law. It has been declared lawful for a Hindu widow to remarry; but the number of such marriages is exceedingly small. Prejudice has proved so strong, that excommunication has followed the doing of what, though permissible by secular, is opposed to Hindu sacred law. The fact that some of these communities are less strict

than others is a relief to those who desire more freedom. A gentleman who through openly eating forbidden food had made himself obnoxious to the members of his own set, for a time got on very well. He had friends like-minded with himself, with whom he could associate. But when his daughters were old enough to be married, his isolation prevented him from obtaining husbands for them. He applied for admission in vain to several sets of his own caste. At last he found one liberal enough to admit him, and so he died "in the odour of sanctity," though he did not change his mode of life.

In addition to these smaller committees, there are what might be almost termed Hindu General Assemblies ; *i.e.* societies formed for the purpose of explaining and enforcing Hindu law and custom, to whom important questions are referred for decision. The members of these are learned pundits, with a sprinkling of others in secular employment. As a specimen of the subjects taken before them for settlement, and also as an example of the subtlety with which they harmonize common sense with the teaching of the Scriptures, may be mentioned that connected with the introduction of the water supply into Calcutta. Hinduism forbids its followers to drink from a vessel that has been touched by a member of another caste. Taps, to which all classes have access, are fixed in the streets. An attempt was made to have some of these reserved for each caste, but when this was found impracticable, the Hindu Dharma Rākshini Sabha (*i.e.* the Society for the Preservation of the Eternal Religion), determined that although it was unlawful for men of different castes to drink from the same vessel, yet, as the people had to pay taxes to meet the expenses of bringing the water, this should be regarded as a sufficient atonement for violating the ordinances of the

Hindu religion. This is a great concession, when it is remembered that in many towns there are tanks which low-caste people are not permitted to approach. An indulgence obtained by taxation is a clever way of obtaining a desired though forbidden boon. That there are degrees of strictness, and that some classes esteem themselves of a superior order, the following story will show. When travelling on the East India Railway, I met two Brāhmans from Mysore. They were educated men; one of them was preparing for the B.A. Examination of the Madras University. As we were a little distance from Benāres, I asked if they had any friends in the holy city. They said, "No, but we soon found some Brāhmans from our part of the country." I said, "Oh, then you were well received and hospitably entertained by them, of course?" I shall never forget the look of disdain with which one of them replied: "Do you think we would eat with men who live in such a city as Benāres, and associate with the Brāhmans of this district? No; we contented ourselves whilst there with one meal a day, which we cooked for ourselves." My question appeared to them about as reasonable as if I had asked a nobleman in England if he had dined with scavengers.

Even Christianity is not sufficiently strong in every case to obliterate this caste prejudice. In some churches in the South of India, at the communion service, two cups are used, one for those who have come from the higher castes, and one for the outcastes. If this were not permitted, many of the caste Christians would absent themselves from the Lord's table. In some parts of Bengal a similar spirit manifested itself for a time; but a few years of severe discipline was successful in restoring the people to conformity with what seems to be the

spirit of Jesus Christ in this matter. In cases of church discipline the system of caste is occasionally imitated. When for misconduct a man is put out of fellowship, the members cease to visit him, or to give him their pipe. Frequently this exclusion from the friendly offices of his brethren leads to penitence, and restoration follows.

The position of the mixed castes is considerably improved. Next to the Brāhmans, in Bengal, the most respectable castes are the Vaidyas and Kāyasthas. These classes are regarded as gentlemen, and a Brāhman will associate with them on almost equal terms, though of course he will not eat, nor will his family intermarry with them. They tread hard upon the heels of the Brāhmans in the colleges and schools, and secure some of the highest honours in the universities. It is difficult to say how this change has been effected. At one time these were despised classes ; now their position is almost equal to that of the Brāhmans ; whilst the mechanics, who probably were the Sūdras in ancient times, have sunk much below them. A story was told me by an eye-witness of the way in which European training acts in destroying these caste prejudices. At the Medical College, Calcutta, a professor, in illustration of his lecture on Hygiene, brought samples of different kinds of cooked food. There was beef roast and boiled, and ham—all, of course, obnoxious to the strict Hindu. No sooner was the lecture concluded, and the lecturer's back turned, than the students rushed from their seats and ate up this forbidden food in the presence of each other—an act that a generation ago would have been followed by excommunication.

The lines have been far more tightly drawn round the different classes with respect to intermarriage and to

the taking of food together. In Manu's time it was common for men of one caste to have a wife belonging to another; the punishment for such offences did not fall upon the guilty parties, but on their children. Nowadays, those who commit the fault are made to suffer; hence it rarely occurs. To an outsider it is difficult to understand the minute distinctions that are made between the classes of the same caste. For example, the Brāhmans of Bengal are divided into several *Srenies*, or classes, as Rauries, Barenders, Vaidiks, and Saptasatis. The Srenies are again subdivided into Kulins, Srotiyas, and Vangsajas. Those belonging to the subdivisions will interchange hospitalities, but will not freely intermarry; the Srenies, however, will neither exchange hospitalities nor intermarry with each other.

Though it is common in India for a man to follow the same profession and calling as his father—so common, in fact, that Europeans have come to speak of different trades and callings as *castes;* as, *e.g.*, they speak of a man belonging to the weaver *caste*, the blacksmith *caste*, the carpenter *caste*, etc.; yet this is a mistake; the *caste* of the people is different from the trade or calling; though it is almost universal for men of the same trade to be of the same caste. As a rule, boys are not apprenticed to strangers as in England; as soon as a lad can be of any assistance, he goes with his father to work, and continues in the same walk of life. In our schools are lads whose fathers are mechanics or small farmers preparing for employment such as those of the higher castes are engaged in. In the army are men of many castes, and it has been used as an argument against those of low caste obtaining promotion, that when relief from duty came, the low-caste officer would bow before the high-caste private. The spread of education

has done much to level up the masses of India, and to lessen the veneration the Brāhman has received as his birthright for many generations.

Another interesting fact is the ease with which a man who has been excommunicated can regain admission to his caste. In most cases it is by the payment of a sum of money to provide a feast for the members of his dal. A man may be brought up before the tribunal, and if the penalty be promptly paid, it fully atones for his misdeeds; *e.g.*, a servant is seen to touch an egg, or food in which there are eggs; on this being reported, he must spend about a month's wages on a feast, and is then absolved! A man dines with men of other castes, or goes to England to study; he has to pay a fine and perform certain purifying ceremonies more or less difficult, and all is well. The majority of educated men do not highly value for themselves the privileges of the caste system; but they do not like to be ignored when birth, marriage, and funeral ceremonies of their friends are held; neither do they like a father to object to allow his sons to marry their daughters. Hence multitudes, purely on social grounds, continue under these restraints. In former times a father regarded it as a great disgrace if his son embraced Christianity; now some say to their boys, "You can become Christians if you wish, and, were I alone to be consulted, you should remain at home; but for the sake of my family connections, you must go elsewhere." As most of the large families have lost at least one member in this way, less is thought of it. Many, however, still regard caste as a divine institution, and dread the divine penalties that will follow any infringement of its rules. They would prefer death to partaking of forbidden food, or doing anything contrary to the teaching of their peculiar sect.

There can be no doubt that it was largely owing to a widespread report that the Government was about to abolish caste that led to the Indian Mutiny.

Sometimes these caste distinctions present themselves in a ludicrous light. If a Hindu servant is sent for anything, from a child to a letter, that is in the hands of a person of a lower caste, it cannot be taken direct from the one who has it; it must be laid down, and then taken up by the other. They will not object to assist in removing a piece of furniture with Christians, but if a low-caste man attempts to touch it, they will turn away. Of course it often happens that when a man does not wish to do anything, he pleads caste difficulties where those rules do not apply.

It is commonly understood that the prohibition of meat for food is always and everywhere in force. As a rule Hindus are vegetarians and abstainers from intoxicating drinks; but many are not so, and yet are not law-breakers. What is forbidden as ordinary food becomes lawful when it is eaten as an act of worship. Some classes will not partake of fish, which, as a rule, is freely eaten by members of most castes; venison is generally allowed, and goat's flesh may be eaten under certain conditions. Goats sacrificed to Kāli are sanctified. Hence, if a man wish for mutton, he has simply to send a goat to a shrine, pay his fee to the officiating priest, and he can then eat it. Flesh, though ordered to be eaten at the Shrādhas, or funeral feasts, is not often provided. For those too poor to purchase a kid, there are shops in which an image of Kāli stands, before which the goat is slain, where they can purchase as much as they require of this sanctified meat. At several shrines the members of high and low castes eat together of food which, having been placed before an image, has been

made holy. When a man wishes to indulge in bhang, or brandy, he has simply to engage in the worship of Siva, who was addicted to the use of intoxicants. In fact, though, in some respects, Hinduism is a rigid system of rules, in other respects it is a most accommodating system, as it provides a way by which its adherents can indulge in forbidden pleasures.

A mere mention of the many castes, with the briefest notice of their peculiarities, would be most wearisome. Dr. Wilson describes no less than twenty-five *classes* of Brāhmans alone, and these again are divided into numerous subdivisions. These divisions are largely geographical; yet each class has marked peculiarities, and in many cases no real intercourse is permitted between them. The following is a brief account of the Brāhmans in Bengal. "Formerly only one order, called the Satsati Brāhmans, were found there, all of whom were equal in honour. Matters stood thus till the time of Adishura, a Bengal Rāja, who, offended with their ignorance when wishing to offer a sacrifice to obtain rain, solicited from Vira Śingha, the king of Kanyakuvja, five Brāhmans to officiate at this sacrifice. The first Brāhmans sent were rejected because they wore stockings, and rode on horses; those afterwards sent were approved; they performed the sacrifice to the satisfaction of the monarch, who gave them grants of land in what the Hindus call the province of Rārha; and from these five Brāhmans are descended almost all the Brāhmans now in the province. They still retain the family names of their original ancestors, Kasyapa, Bharadwaja, Sandilya, Sávarna, Bātsya. Some of the descendants of these Brāhmans, in consequence of removing into the province of Vārendra, are called Vārendra Brāhmans, and those who remained at Rārha are

known as Rārhis. These comprise all the Brāhmans in Bengal, except the Vaidikas, and about 1500 or 2000 families of the Satsati, or original Bengal Brāhmans, of whom there were about 700 families in the time of Adhisura. The Vaidikas are said to have fled from Orissa from the fear of being made Vāmācharis; and because they were better students of the Vedas than the other Brāhmans they were called Vaidikas. From these ancestors have branched no fewer than 156 families, of which the precedence was fixed by Ballāla Sen, who reigned in the twelfth century of the Christian era."

The principal classes amongst them are the following:—

*Rārha Kulina Brāhmans.* These form the highest class as fixed by Ballāla Sen, because of their possessing the following nine good qualities: Observance of Brāhmanical customs, meekness, learning, good report, a disposition to visit holy places, devoutness, observance of marriage amongst equals only, asceticism, and liberality. And special privileges were given to them, particulars of which will be given in another chapter. *Bhanga Kulinas: i.e.*, those whose *kul*, or honour, is broken: this has resulted from their marrying beneath them. Of these there are no less than thirty-six classes. The *Vanshaja* class is formed of those born in the fifth generation after the act by which a Kulina of the first class fell into the second, or became a Bhanga Kulina. The *Ghattakas*, or marriage-brokers for the Brāhmans, generally belong to this class. The *Vaidikas.* These possess only eight of the nine Brāhmanical qualities, but are learned in the Sāstras. The *Vārendras* are similar to them. The *Saptashatis* are the descendants of the Brāhmans who were passed over by king Adishura

because of their ignorance, and now earn their living by attending Shrādhas and other religious ceremonies for the dead. The *Agradānis*. These have fallen in caste, and can only intermarry amongst their own class, because they do not scruple to take presents at the Preta Shrādha, or the first ceremonies for the dead. The *Maraiporas* repeat the mantras over the dead, by which act their honour is lost. The *Rapali* Brāhmans are those who perform religious ceremonies for the Rapalis who work in jute: in like manner, those who do similar acts for goldsmiths, fishermen, etc., bear the name of the class for whom their services are available. Generally the doing of religious duty for low-caste Hindus lowers them in the esteem of their caste fellows, who will not eat with them. The *Pir Āli Brāhmans*. To this class some of the most respectable families of Calcutta belong. Years ago one of their ancestors went to the house of a Mussulmān, where a trick was played him. The Mussulmān had heard it said that to "smell food was half eating it;" and wishing to convert some of the Brāhmans in his neighbourhood, he invited them to his house, and then ordered his dinner to be served. They smelt the food, and their caste was gone. Some of them became Mussulmāns; but one who preferred to remain a Hindu, became the founder of another class, called the Pir Āli, after the man who had brought this trouble upon him.

Though many of the Brāhmans have taken to other employment, many are supported by lands given for this purpose by kings and rich men. At the religious festivals they are well paid for work, though they complain bitterly of the evil times in which their lot is cast.

From the census of 1881 a few interesting facts can

be gathered respecting the numbers included in the most important castes. The divisions adopted by the Government were as follows:—1. Brāhmans; 2. Kshetriyas; 3. Other Hindu castes; 4. Aboriginal classes; 5. Hindus not recognizing caste distinctions; 6. Castes not stated. The Hindu population of Bengal, which may be taken as a fair sample of the whole country, being reckoned at about 45½ millions, we find them classified as follows:—

| | |
|---|---|
| I. Asiatics other than natives of the Indian Empire | 7,026 |
| II. Natives of the Indian Empire:— | |
| *a.* Aboriginal tribes | 1,365,215 |
| *b.* Semi-Hinduized aborigines | 10,618,415 |
| *c.* Hindus proper:— | |
| 1. Superior castes (Brāhmans, Kshetriyas, etc.) | 4,897,426 |
| 2. Intermediate (Vaidyas, 84,990; Kayasthas, 1,450,848, etc.) | 2,777,124 |
| 3. Trading classes (Vaisyas, 9,320) | 963,159 |
| 4. Pastoral classes, chiefly Gwallas | 4,115,377 |
| 5. Classes engaged in preparing (cooked) food | 924,984 |
| 6. Agricultural classes | 6,875,197 |
| 7. Classes engaged in personal service (*i.e.* barbers, washermen, palanquin-bearers, etc.) | 2,804,003 |
| 8. Artisans | 4,482,471 |
| 9. Weavers | 1,619,344 |
| 10. Labourers | 546,839 |
| 11. Fish and vegetable salesmen | 142,417 |
| 12. Fishermen and boatmen | 2,131,433 |
| 13. Dancers, musicians, beggars, and vagabond classes | 43,255 |
| *d.* Persons enumerated by nationality only | 48,114 |
| *e.* Persons of Hindu origin not recognizing caste, such as Vaishnavas, Gosains, etc. | 683,227 |
| *f.* Hindus, castes not stated | 376,451 |

In this enumeration about 100 castes are mentioned; of these the Gwalla, or cow-herds, are the most numerous, numbering nearly 4,000,000; the Brāhmans number

about $2\frac{3}{4}$ millions. The proportion of the classes mentioned above are as follows :—

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | Superior castes | 10·77 |
| 2. | Intermediate | 6·10 |
| 3. | Traders | 2·11 |
| 4. | Pastoral classes | 9·05 |
| 5. | Food sellers | 2·03 |
| 6. | Agriculturalists | 15·12 |
| 7. | Servants | 6·16 |
| 8. | Artisans | 9·86 |
| 9. | Weavers | 3·56 |
| 10. | Labourers | 1·20 |
| 11. | Greengrocers | 0·31 |
| 12. | Boatmen and fishermen | 4·68 |
| 13. | Musicians, etc. | ·09 |
| 14. | Uncertain, and those not recognizing caste | 1·50 |

"Thirty castes have representatives in every division of the province, and a reference to their names in the margin will show that they are all castes of general utility, whose services are indispensable to that microcosm, the Bengal village.

| | |
|---|---|
| Brāhman, | Kandu, |
| Rājput, | Kayastha, |
| Baniya, | Kumhar, |
| Barhi, | Kurmi, |
| Barni, | Madak, |
| Chamār, | Māli, |
| Dhobi, | Mallah, |
| Dom, | Nāpit, |
| Gwalla, | Sunri, |
| Hāri, | Tamoli, |
| Jaliya, | Tanti, |
| Jugi, | Teli, |
| Kahar, | Tevi, |
| Kaibartha, | Bhuinya, |
| Karmakar, | Khawar. |

"The Brāhman has a home in every hamlet as family or temple priest, or in secular employ as teacher, orderly, or other superior service. The Rājput plays a similar secular part. Where half a dozen huts cluster together, there the Baniya sets up his petty shop and opens his loan business. No village is complete without its oilman (Teli), or its carpenter (Barhi), who mends its ploughs, builds its houses, and supplies the wood for the cremation of its dead.

Not less necessary is the cobbler (Chamār), who skins the carcases of the village cattle, makes the cartman's whips, and keeps in repair the shoes of the community; while his wife has the monopoly of obstetric practice. The washerman (Dhobi) and the barber (Nāpit) are as indispensable to a people hedged around by ceremonial observances as the scavengers (Dom, Hāri) are to remove unclean substances and to maintain an affectation of sanitation. The services of the blacksmith (Karmakar, or Lohar) are in daily requisition, and the potter (Kumhar) makes the earthen plates and bowls which nine-tenths of the people use for cooking and eating from. The confectioner (Madak and Kandu) is a necessity among a people whose food is almost wholly farinaceous, and who are often obliged to have it in a portable form, and to eat it under the shadow of a tree, or by the road-side, whenever they find leisure to do so. The petty luxuries of village life are provided by the Sunri, who sells wine, and the Barni and Tamoli, who grow and vend the aromatic pān-leaf and the astringent betel-nut so dear to native palates. The Tanti and the Jugi weave the coarse clothes which the village folk wear, and the Māli grows the flowers for the local shrine, or the frequent domestic festival, as well as the better kind of vegetables with which the villager mends his coarse fare. All these artisans work for a community whose main ingredients are cultivators and herdsmen. The agricultural element, from which few castes are altogether dissociated, is mainly supplied by the Kaibarthas in Bengal, Kurmis in Behar, and Chassas in Orissa. The Gwalla (cow-keeper) is a familiar and frequent figure in every corner of the land. The cow is to the Hindu much more than the camel to the Arab, and it fills a large place in every phase of his daily life. . . . The

great rivers of Bengal support a numerous race of boatmen (Mallah), and the craving for fish among a people to most of whom other animal food is interdicted, either by necessity or prejudice, employs as large a number of fishermen (Tevi). The Kahar is ubiquitous, sometimes as a carrier of palkies, and therefore indispensable at all weddings, or as a domestic servant. The Kayastha, who once shared with the Brāhman the monopoly of learning, still thrives in every hamlet, from Patna to Cuttack, as the schoolmaster, the village accountant, or the landlord's confidential secretary. Lastly, the shifting population of the community, the daily labourers and field hands, are supplied by two castes, the Bhuinyas and the Khawars, the former of whom Mr. Magrath thought were once the autochthones of Behar; while the latter name, being that of a large separate tribe, is an alternative epithet for one sub-division of the Santhals." *

There is one very important fact brought out by these returns as compared with those of the census of 1872, respecting the semi-Hinduized aboriginal tribes, as they are called, showing how rapidly those who nine years ago were regarded as aboriginals have come to be reckoned as Hindus.

| | Census of 1872. | 1881. |
|---|---|---|
| Aboriginal tribes | 2,738,813 | 1,365,215 |
| Semi-Hinduized tribes | 9,474,243 | 10,618,451 |

The Census report says: "Looking first at the figures for 1881, the most obvious point to the observer is the large proportion of the class of semi-Hinduized aborigines. Accepting the distribution of 1872, they now appear to number nearly one-fourth of the Hindu population. They are for the most part hewers of wood and

* Bengal Census Report, vol. i. p. 138.

drawers of water, and are beyond cavil the remnants of the nations whom successive invaders, culminating with the Āryans, found in possession of the country, and absorbed more or less into their system of polity. Those of the aboriginal tribes which were most remote from the scene of the invasion, or were so situated as to be able to withstand it, have retained to this day their primeval language and customs, and their tribal faiths. Those, on the other hand, who were most exposed to the wave of conquest, who were least able to resist, or who were most ready to amalgamate with the new-comers, were absorbed into their community, but relegated to its lowest grades, and employed in its most menial offices. Such was the treatment which the inhabitants of the country received at the hands of the Hindu invaders. The question of absorption is only one of time and opportunity. Many of the castes shown as low-caste Hindus, and now universally accepted as such, have peculiarities which give rise to the suspicion that they are not pure Hindus of the Āryan type; but they are to all intents and purposes low-caste Hindus, and are treated as such without question. The class of semi-Hinduized aborigines are only a stage behind them in their progress towards Hinduism. What many of the low-caste Hindus once were, the semi-Hinduized aboriginals are now; and in the lapse of time, they, too, will recruit the ranks of the Hindus, as inter-marriage and social intercourse gradually obliterate more and more their distinctive characteristics."

It is interesting to see how the embracing of Hinduism in past ages has dignified their descendants in the present day. It is probable that Brāhmanism did not spread through Nepāl until the fifteenth century. Driven there by the Mussulmān invasion, the Hindu

exiles readily received converts, making them, and also their own descendants by the hill women, Kshatriyas. From these two sources spring the *Khas*, originally the name of a small clan of creedless barbarians, now the proud title of the Kshatriya order of the kingdom of Nepāl, who also bear the family names of the Brāhmanical orders. And, strange to say, the Brāhmans there who officiate in temples and at festivals not only eat goats and sheep, but also fowls, and rear pigs for their own tables. Both the strict Brāhmans and the so-called Kshatriyas drink water that is brought by the Kachar Bhutiyas, men who kill cows and eat beef without scruple; yet in some other respects caste is most rigorously observed. In the matter of marriage and adultery the strictest rules prevail. A Brāhman, if a soldier, and the Kshatriyas are bound in honour, if their wife prove unfaithful, themselves to slay the offender and cut off the wife's nose and drive her from their home.

The history of the conversion of the Manipuris to Hinduism is interesting, and shows how the propagation of the faith is carried on. About a hundred years ago Ghorit Nawaj, the founder of the family of the present Rāja, was converted to Hinduism by a wandering Sanyasi, who then declared that the Manipuris were all Hindus, but had forgotten their privileges and duties. He ordered the people to bathe and make expiation for their long neglect, and then declared them to be Hindus of the Kshatriya caste. A similar story is told of the Hindus of Cachar.

## CHAPTER IV.

### KULINISM AND POLYGAMY.

As a rule the Hindus are not polygamists. Under special circumstances it is permissible for them to take a second wife whilst the first is still living. Where seven years after marriage no son is born, the Law Books authorize a man to marry again, because a son is necessary to perform the funeral rites of his father and remoter ancestors. In these cases the new bride comes to her husband's home, and though the superseded wife remains the nominal head of the household, the presence of a second and favoured wife, especially when she has a son in her arms, renders the position of the older woman most painful. One has only to read of the domestic life of Jacob to see what inevitably follows where a younger and more fortunate wife resides in the house with the older and despised one. Sometimes, it is true, the older woman receives the younger with kindness; but if the home life as depicted by native writers be correct, generally there is jealousy and misery. Many of the well-to-do men keep concubines, but these have a separate establishment; it is, however, not uncommon for the children of the legal and illegal unions to meet together, fully aware of their common fatherhood. But though concubinage is not peculiar to India, in the

position of the Kulin Brāhmans, who may marry as many wives as they wish, there is something peculiar. To make the origin of this system clear it will be necessary to repeat a little of the history of the Brāhmans in Bengal.

In the reign of King Adishura, the number of Brāhmans in his kingdom of Gour was considerably reduced, and those who remained were for the most part unable to read the Vedas in the original Sanskrit ; whilst of the Sagnic Brāhmans, *i.e.* those versed in the ritual of certain sacrifices, not one was to be found. A drought of unusual duration threatening his country, the king, wishing to make a sacrifice at which only Sagnic priests could officiate, sent to the king of Kanouj, the capital of Hindustan proper, for a number of these learned men. Five priests, tempted by the liberal offers made by the king of Gour, consented to migrate to his kingdom.

These men were Brāhmans of the highest order, who could trace their origin to the divine sages, the sons of Brahmā himself. Immediately on their arrival at Gour they commenced their sacrificial work. Neighbouring princes who were present at this important celebration returned to their homes delighted, and amazed at the superior piety and knowledge of these newly-arrived priests who had come from what they regarded as their ancestral home.

When the work for which they came was completed they settled down in their new home to enjoy the honours and emoluments the king showered upon them. But despising the native Brāhmans on account of their ignorance and mode of life, they would not associate with them in their feasts, nor intermarry into their families, but formed an entirely separate sect. After a time, however, their descendants were not so scrupulous ;

many of them fraternized with the Brāhmans of the country. At length a king named Ballāla Sen, whose doings the poets have never ceased to praise, dissatisfied with the ecclesiastical condition of his kingdom, determined to arrange the priests into classes. He saw that many of the Kanouj families were not as pure, nor were their priests as learned, as they ought to be. He selected some whom he believed to be possessed of certain excellences, to whom he gave the title of *Kūl*, or Honourable; whilst to others, as he conceived them proportionately less worthy, he gave less honourable titles. These men, styled *Kulins*, were intended to be the founders of a spiritual aristocracy; their children, if born as the result of marriages into families equally honourable, were to inherit all the honours and privileges granted to their fathers.

At the present time Kulinism is the cause of unnumbered ills. Many of these honourable men esteem it quite beneath their dignity to work, though they do not object to be supported by the parents of those whom they have condescended to ennoble by marriage; in many of them the virtues for which the title of "honourable" was given being conspicuously absent.

"The Kulins, who were ennobled by Ballāla Sen, were of divers *mels*, or orders, of which four were, and are still, considered primary. They take their designation from the places where, at their own request, they were allowed to settle, and they are to this day distinguished by the names of Fule, Khardah, Sarvānandi, and Ballāvi. In these orders were comprehended the most meritorious of the descendants of the five colonists from Kanouj; that is, the most virtuous of the Banerjeas, Mookerjeas, Chatterjeas, Ghosāls, and Ganjulies." It will be understood that not all those who

bear these common names are Kulins. Some of the Banerjeas, for instance, were never admitted into the honourable brotherhood, and some once honoured have, through intermarriage with other than Kulins, caused their descendants to pass into lower grades.

"Lakshman Sen, the son and successor of Ballāla Sen, followed up and improved the heraldry instituted by his father, and enlarged the names and orders of the Kūls to an enormous length. The primary orders were left untouched; the inferior or secondary orders were spun out into nearly thirty subdivisions.

"Besides these Kulins another order of Brāhmans was honoured in Ballāla's time who were called the Srotriyas. The descendants of the five Kanouj Brāhmans, though at first they avoided all intercourse with the aboriginal Brāhmans of Bengal, were subsequently induced to accept their daughters as wives. The offspring of these marriages were considered inferior to their fathers, but superior to their mothers and maternal grandfathers. They had half the blood of Kanouj, and were therefore esteemed superior to the aboriginal priests, and they had half the blood of the Saptasatis, and were held inferior to their fathers. The most meritorious of these persons the king honoured with the title of Srotriyas. They had this privilege amongst others, that the Kulins might marry their daughters without prejudice to their rank. They have accordingly proved a connecting link between the Kulins and the Saptasatis. Their houses are the authorized nurseries for breeding wives for the exalted Brāhmans, and they take no small pride in reflecting on the importance which this honour imparts to the class. What enhances their privilege is the fact that the Kulins cannot marry women from any other families, not even from the

subordinate Kulins themselves, without degrading their offspring.

"The Kulins are strictly forbidden to receive wives from families inferior to themselves, with the exception of the Srotriyas just mentioned. When this rule is transgressed, although the delinquent himself does not suffer personally, his *kūl* is said to be broken. He himself dies, as he was born, in the enjoyment of his honour; but his offspring forfeit the title, and the glory of the family becomes tarnished." "Although an unequal marriage breaks a person's *kūl*, his immediate descendants are not classed with common Brāhmans; for four or five generations the recollections of their ancestral dignity secures for the sons of a broken Kulin great honour and distinction. The brightness and lustre of a noble family are supposed to be incapable of being tarnished at once and by a single act, though the days of its glory are numbered, and nothing will restore it to its primitive greatness. The immediate offspring of such a family are designated the sons of a Swakritā bhanga, or self-broken Kulin, and esteemed as inferior by one step only to the untainted orders. The next generation is esteemed the third in rank. This gradual deterioration continues to the fourth and fifth generations, after which the glory of the family is obscured, and it sinks to the level of the commonalty." It is now difficult to find Brāhmans of unbroken kūl. Many of the highest rank are once or twice removed from those who had this honour.

The law prohibiting the marriage of Kulins with those of less honourable rank was made to secure the family purity of this high class; and in order to become united to this aristocracy it is considered desirable for a Brāhman to marry his daughter to a Kulin husband. Not

the Srotriyas only, but the Brāhmans of the inferior orders, are most anxious to obtain a Kulin son-in-law. Hence these men are eagerly sought after by fathers, and immense sums of money paid to purchase their consent to wed their daughters; and hence has arisen the great evil of the system—viz., polygamy to an almost unlimited extent.

"The laws which regulate the marriage of Kulin females are cruelly stringent; these must not on any account be given to any unless they are of an equal or superior grade. Neither the Srotriyas nor any inferior order can aspire to the hand of a Kulin's daughter. An indelible disgrace would be affixed upon such a prostitution of a girl of birth and family. Thus her hereditary honour becomes her heaviest misfortune. The greatest difficulty is experienced in settling her in life. The only circles from which a husband can be selected are in request everywhere and by everybody. To outbid the Srotriyas and others in the purchase of a noble bridegroom requires larger funds than many a Kulin can command. The greatest misery and distress are accordingly occasioned. . . . No parent dares to risk his daughter's virtue by allowing her to live a single life. The institutions of Hinduism, too, denounce the fiercest anathemas against such conduct. The severest condemnation is passed on a Brāhman who neglects to get his daughter married before her tenth year. Longer delay entails upon the delinquent the guilt and infamy of infanticide." Under these circumstances the poor Kulin father is in the greatest difficulty. He cannot allow her to marry any one belonging to a lower caste; he cannot afford to purchase a suitable husband in his own. His only resource is to appeal to some decrepit old Kulin Brāhman, who already has a multitude of

wives, to save the honour of his family by adding one more to his list. Parents have been known, when a man has evidently been at the point of death, to marry their daughter to him rather than incur the disgrace of having her remain unmarried.

Kulinism, then, is the root cause of polygamy. Sometimes from cupidity, sometimes from pity, sometimes from mere animalism, a man is led to marry a multitude of wives. He does not provide a home for any, but usually stays at the house of one of his fathers-in-law, and pays an occasional visit to his other wives when their fathers offer an inducement for him to honour them with his presence. Some Kulins are content with one wife, and maintain her in a comfortable home; but many are simply the husbands of their many wives, and expect to be supported by the men whom they have honoured by becoming their sons-in-law. A system more calculated to lead to immorality and misery it would be difficult to imagine. And this is the outcome of an arrangement that was made to honour some who were considered more worthy than the rest of their caste-fellows.

The kūls hitherto spoken of are those of the Rāreya Brāhmans, so called from the neighbourhood in which they settled. But the neighbouring princes, seeing the glory of the five Brāhmans who came at Adishura's invitation, wished to have their country also illumined by the presence of these wise and holy men. Birmallah, king of Barender, father-in-law to Adishura, preferred a similar request to the king of Kanouj, in answer to which five Brāhmans were sent to him also. These two classes, although they came from the same place, and might have been considered equal in their own country, now form two great classes—the Barenders and the Rāreyas

—between whom intermarriage is prohibited, as are also the rites of hospitality. The patron of the Barender Brāhmans arranged their descendants into classes, as Ballāla Sen arranged those in his dominions.

Ballāla Sen did not only establish kūls amongst the Brāhmans, but gave titles of honour also to the Kayasthas who came as their attendants, although, according to the strict teaching of Hinduism, they were sankers, or half-castes; the descendants of Vaisya fathers and Sudra mothers. The names of these were Makaranda Ghose, Dasaratha Bose, Kāli Dass Mitter, Purushottama Datta, and Dasaratha Guha. These were the progenitors of the most respectable Kayasthas in Bengal. Of these five, three only, viz., Ghose, Bose, and Mitter, acknowledged themselves to be the slaves of the Brāhmans, and were rewarded for their servility by being made Kulin Kayasthas. Datta made the same admission, though with some reserve, and was not thus honoured, though intermarriage between his family and that of the Kulins was permitted; but Guha, refusing to give up his freedom, was regarded as a Kulin only as compared with the Kayasthas he found already settled in Bengal.

Such, then, is the origin of Kulinism, a source of unmitigated evil to many families at the present time. It is only fair to say that some of the more respectable Hindus, and amongst them several of the Kulins themselves, have endeavoured to end this iniquitous system; and when it is known that it does not profess to be a divine institution, but was an arbitrary arrangement of a man who was an admirer of the Brāhmanical order, and who wished to increase their honour and wealth, it seems to be a case in which humanity cries aloud to the Government to forbid its continuance. There would

be an outcry from those who benefit by the system, but the relief that the stoppage of the practice would give would be far greater than the discontent.

The following official notice of Kulins and their ways is a carefully weighed statement. It appeared in the *Gazette of India*, Feb. 7, 1867, and is signed C. P. Hobhouse, H. T. Prinsep, Suttshara Ghosal, Ishwar Chandra Surma, Ramanath Tagore, Joy Kissen Mookerjea, Degumber Mitter; the last three gentlemen, while subscribing to the report generally, state that the practice of polygamy obtains in a more mitigated form than it did a few years before.

"We will now describe some of the main customs in the matter of marriage which, on the authority of the statements made in petitions to the Legislative Council, and in some instances within the knowledge of more than one of the native gentlemen on our committee, obtain amongst the Bhanga Kulinas; and we will state what are declared in the papers before us to be the evil results of some of those customs:—

1. In addition to the presents usually given amongst all classes of the Hindus on the occasion of marriage, a Bhanga Kulina always, except when he gives his daughter to a brother Bhanga, and takes in exchange that brother Bhanga's daughter, exacts a consideration for marriage from the family of the bride.

2. A present is often given in addition on the occasion of any visit made to the house of the father-in-law.

3. If the daughters of the first and second subdivisional classes of Bhanga Kulinas cannot be given in marriage to husbands of their own classes, they must remain unmarried.

4. The number of wives, including those of the same

class, is said to be often as many as 15, 20, 40, 60, 80.*

5. Polygamy is said to be resorted to as a sole means of livelihood by many Bhanga Kulinas.

6. Marriage, it is said, is contracted quite in old age, and the husband often never sees his wife, or only, at the best, visits her once in every three or four years or so.

7. As many as three and four, even twenty-three marriages, have been known to have been contracted in one day.

8. Sometimes all a man's daughters and his unmarried sisters are given in marriage to one and the same individual.

9. It is so difficult to find husbands in the proper class for Kulina women that numbers, it is said, remain unmarried.

10. The married and unmarried daughters and wives of Kulinas are said to live in the utmost misery; and it is alleged that crimes of the most heinous nature, such as adultery, abortion, infanticide, and prostitution are the common results of Bhanga Kulina marriages generally.

11. Cases are cited of men who have married 82, 72, 65, 60, and 42 wives, and have had 18, 32, 41, 25, and 32 sons; and 26, 27, 25, 15, 16 daughters.

12. Lists have been adduced of families in the Burdwan and Hugli districts alone showing the existence of a plurality of wives on the above scale, and of numerous cases.

13. The principle on which Kulinism was perpetuated, viz., that of preventing intermarriages between certain classes, is violated.

* Dr. Wilson mentions some cases known to pundits, with whom he had conversed on the subject, where the number was 100 and 150.

14. Families, it is said, are ruined in order to provide the large sums requisite to give a consideration on the occasion of their daughters' marriages, or are unable to marry their daughters at all for want of means to procure such consideration.

15. Marriages, it is said, are contracted simply in order to [obtain] this consideration, and the husbands do not even care to inquire what becomes of their wives, and have never had any intention of fulfilling any of the marriage duties.

16. The crimes that are said to result from the Kulina system of marriage are said to be habitually concealed by the actors in them and by their neighbours, and this so as to baffle the efforts of the police at discovery.

17. No provision is made for the maintenance of one wife, before marriage with an unlimited number of others."

If these statements can be relied on, and they form the body of a report to the Legislative Council of India, and, if it were possible, would certainly have been controverted, no words of comment can add to their weight. These Kulinas are strict Hindus, and accounted worthy of the greatest respect. They are the "honourable class," the aristocracy of India.

# HINDU SECTS.

## CHAPTER I.

### GENERAL REMARKS ON THE HINDU SECTS.

BEFORE passing on to notice the peculiarities of the sects into which the Hindus are divided, it will not be out of place to give a very brief sketch of the chief phases through which Hinduism has passed.

When one branch of the great Āryan family migrated to India, they brought with them the religious ideas and mythology common to the whole. The deities of the Vedic age differ little from those of the older forms of Greek and Latin; whilst the forms of worship were almost identical. After settling in their new home the Rishis or Sages developed the ideas they brought with them; the form of this development being largely determined by the character of the country into which they had come. The beliefs and practices of the original inhabitants of the country also tended to modify the forms Hinduism assumed. As this religious system developed, as the restrictions it imposed upon its adherents increased in severity, as the distinctions of caste became more marked, and the privileges claimed by the higher rendered the position of the despised classes more intolerable, the people were prepared to listen to the teaching of Buddha, who rose as a Reformer, teaching the equality and brotherhood of man, and pointing out how the highest good was attainable by

all, and was not reserved for the members of the highest caste. For a long time the work of preparation must have been going on, and dissatisfaction with the Hinduism of the day must have been very general, otherwise Buddha's immense success would not have been possible. The great teacher commenced his work as a Reformer about B.C. 600; by B.C. 300 his system had become almost universal in North India.

Gautama at first did not manifest antagonism to Hinduism; he was trained in its tenets, and the larger part of his doctrine is identical with that of the ascetics with whom he associated. What he did was to select, modify, and emphasize certain parts that appeared of supreme importance. Before his death he had gained a large number of disciples, and when he died a council was held to appoint a leader. A century later, a second council met, and almost a century later, a third. These served a two-fold purpose; they revised the creed, and arranged for the teaching of the doctrine. Missionaries were sent far and wide, and there is no doubt that Buddhism was largely embraced by the people as well as the accepted religion of the rulers.

What was there in Buddhism that will account for its rapid spread? It exalted kings. Previously kings had ruled, but they were controlled by the Brāhmans. Buddha's teaching undermined the power of the Brāhmans. It repudiated caste. Gradually the chains of this slavery were riveted on the Hindu mind: when Buddha proclaimed that all were free, his words were sweet to the low caste and down-trodden races.

Great was its popularity we know; but how the Hindus, who were partial to the old system of things, came to see in Buddhism an enemy and not a friend; how the two at length came to open rupture; how they

carried on mutual warfare; these important and interesting questions at present must remain without an answer, for Hinduism has left few ruins to mark the places where its powerful and popular rival had gathered its devotees. The first record of persecution is about A.D. 196. This, however, could be only local, as in the fifth century Buddhism was still supreme in many places. Kumarila Bhatta is said to have been the chief leader of the persecution, and he worked for the accomplishment of his purpose, not merely by the use of the civil power, but by presenting Hinduism in a more attractive character than it had previously assumed. At the end of the fifth century the hierarchs of Buddhism found an asylum in China; and numbers of the people migrated eastward to lands where the doctrines had found a home, or where as yet they had not been carried. As late as the twelfth century, a few Buddhists remained in the country, but now none are seen.

But though Buddhism was for some centuries the most popular religion in the north of India, there must have been a large number of people attached to the older Hinduism. These gradually grew in strength until there was a fierce struggle for supremacy. The worship of Siva, and Vishnu, in somewhat modified forms, in due time supplanted the religion of Buddha. In the eighth century a great impulse was given to Saivaism by Sankarācharjya, a Vedantist. Though himself a Deist, he encouraged idolatry in the case of the ignorant. One of his last sayings was this: "O Lord, pardon my three sins; I have in contemplation clothed Thee who art shapeless with a shape; I have in praise described Thee who art indescribable; and by visiting the Tirthas (shrines) I have ignored Thine omnipresence."

We now pass on to the consideration of Hinduism as it is. To a cursory observer it appears to be a compact system, and the people are under the impression that its doctrine and practice have always been what they are to-day. They know of little change, and their pundits have not excelled as historians. And as there is no orthodox church persecuting those who differ, and no mutual jealousies and rival factions, but a general indifference regarding the beliefs of other people, one may imagine that this has been the usual state of affairs. But a closer examination shows that there is as great diversity amongst the peoples of India as amongst those of Christendom: the persecuting spirit being absent because of the general want of earnestness in matters of faith. They cannot proselytize, because the blessings to be enjoyed through the Hindu religion can only be obtained by those who are born in Hindu families. Where the aboriginal tribes have been absorbed into the Hindu community, they form only the very lowest caste, and have, as their chief hope, the possibility of rising in future births into the higher and more favoured ones. And so latitudinarian are the leaders of Hindu society in this wicked age, the Kali Yuga, that they believe they are only fulfilling the prophecies of degeneration made centuries ago, when they teach that it does not matter what a man believes so long as he observes the rules of the particular caste to which he may belong.

So far does the liberality of the Hindu go, that whilst believing in the divine origin of his own religion, he will admit that Mohamedanism and Christianity may be given by the same Being. And further, that it is the duty of all to continue in the system in which they were born. In the shops are pictures on sale which

illustrate this phase of Hindu contemporary thought. There is a figure of a man with eight arms, each of a different colour, the representatives of Brahmā, Vishnu, Siva, Rāma, Kāli, and Durgā (the most popular of the Hindu deities) Mohamed with the Korān, and Jesus with the Bible. Only birth can admit a man into the privileged classes of Hindu society, therefore it would be casting pearls before swine to attempt to proselytize other nations. The Hindu does not therefore interfere with men of other religions, nor molest those who as Hindus may differ in creed from himself. He lets other people walk in their own way, whilst he asks that they will not disturb his religious beliefs. As the Christian child sings, "I thank the goodness and the grace that on my birth have smiled" in making me a Christian, the Hindu thanks the gods that he is a Hindu; and the best wish he can express on behalf of those not so highly privileged is that in some future birth they may appear on the earth as such.

There are many gods worshipped by the Hindus, and though each has his own chosen deity, he recognizes the godhead of the rest, and when the proper day for their worship comes will generally take part with their most earnest devotees. I say *generally*, for there are features in the worship of Siva and his consort Kāli which the worshippers of Vishnu regard with abhorrence. There can be no doubt that, however free from sectarian bigotry the present generation of Hindus may be, this was not always the temper they cherished. There was bitter animosity, burning jealousy, and fierce conflicts between the worshippers of the rival deities. But religious earnestness has given place to indifference, and the Hindu of to-day will calmly look on, though he may not actually join in religious rites that he believes

his own particular object of worship regards with detestation. Nay, many of the priests who officiate at the festivals of Durgā, in which sacrifices of buffaloes and goats are offered, are in private the worshippers of Vishnu, one characteristic of whose worship is the sacredness of life. An old Brāhman priest told me that in his private worship he first made an offering to his chosen deity, Nārāyana (Vishnu), and then threw a handful of rice broadcast for the other deities to scramble for it, and hoped, by thus recognizing their existence and authority, to keep them in good humour towards himself. He assured me that this was the general idea of the Hindus. Stories are found in the Purānas teaching that the earnest devotee of one deity is not safe from evil that others may bring upon him—hence the practice of a general acknowledgment of the other beings who claim the worship of the people.

In the following sketch of the Hindu sects we shall see that some sectarians have sprung up whose teaching was distinctly opposed to what is found in the older religious writings. Some have taught that the Vedas themselves were obsolete, and have tried to lessen the authority of the Brāhmans. In the case of Buddha this effort was successful for centuries; and there is no doubt that it is largely owing to the teaching of that great reformer that the worship of Vishnu, which is, in some respects, entirely opposed to that of Siva and his wife, is so general at the present time. Buddhism was outwardly obliterated, and its followers exiled; but it still lives, with some modifications, under the various forms of Vaishnavism.

One marked distinction of the Hinduism of the present day is the substitution of deities that were unknown in the Vedic age for those then worshipped. The gods of

the old Pantheon are almost forgotten, whilst others to whose praise the Purānas are devoted have taken their place. Attempts have been made to connect these present-day gods with those of the olden time, but it is not difficult to see that this is a trick of the writers to deceive the people, who would not knowingly depart from the faiths of their fathers. So great has been the change, that the names of some of the older deities are scarcely known to the common people. As an illustration of the way in which the Purānas are devoted to the special lauding of one deity to the disparagement of the others, Siva, who in some of the Purānas is made the supreme, is in the Padma Purāna represented as saying that "those who adore other gods than Vishnu, or who hold that others are his equals, and all Brāhmans who are not Vaishnavas (worshippers of Vishnu) are not to be looked at, touched, or spoken to." Siva, in acknowledging that the distinguishing marks of his votaries—the skull, tiger's skin, and ashes, are reprobated by the Vedas—states that he was directed by Vishnu to inculcate their adoption purposely to lead those who adopted them into error, and thereby render them wicked and weak. The Bhāgavata says, "Those who worship Siva (Bhava) and those who follow their doctrines are heretics and enemies of the sacred Sastras;" whilst the Padma Purāna declares "for even looking at Vishnu the wrath of Siva is kindled, and from his wrath we fall assuredly into a horrible hell: let not, therefore, the name of Vishnu even be pronounced."

In the Padma Purāna the eighteen sacred books are classified as follows: Six of them which have a general bias in favour of Siva, and inculcate his peculiar worship, are imbued with the spirit of Tāmasa, or darkness, and the study of them condemns a man to hell; six are

imbued with Sātivika, or truth, and are devoted to the praise of Vishnu: the study of these procures Mukti—*i.e.*, final deliverance from the evils of life and absorption into the Deity; and six are imbued with Rājasa, or passion: these are devoted to the praise of Sakti, or the female principle in nature, and their study will ensure entrance into Swarga, or heaven; a less goodly boon than "*mukti,*" because its bliss is but temporary. I shall never forget the lesson I learned from some Brāhmans on this subject. After preaching in a village the priests of a neighbouring temple, in a confidential manner, asked me to tell them the essence of the religion I was trying to set up in India. After speaking of Jesus and His work, and assuring them that His disciples were by Him made pure and admitted into (Swarga) heaven—after a little consideration they said if that was all I had to offer, Christianity had no attraction for them; they wished for *mukti*, absorption into Deity, not merely entrance into heaven, the blessedness of which they believed to be terminable.

It should be noticed that the more thoughtful of the Hindus repudiate the idea of being connected with any sect. If asked to describe themselves they say they are Hindus or Vedantists. And no doubt they come near in belief and worship to their old Āryan forefathers. We may therefore take them as the orthodox section, and the others as more or less heterodox. The number of these is very small; and whilst they repudiate many of the grosser forms of Hinduism that prevail amongst their more ignorant neighbours, they do not attempt to instruct or raise them to their higher level. They say that though the more popular forms of Hinduism are not good for themselves, they are suited to the ignorant masses. And though an outsider might be disposed to

regard the Vedantist as more in harmony with the older form of the Hindu faith, the people would not be disposed to acknowledge their superiority. Authority in the older or more modern Scriptures is to be found for all, even the grossest forms of Hinduism that now prevail.

## CHAPTER II.

### VEDANTISM, OR ORTHODOX HINDUISM.

TO speak correctly, this is rather a system of philosophy than of religion; and whilst some Vedantists in philosophy are members of some of the sects, in the case of many it is their religion, and may be taken as orthodox Hinduism from which the teaching of the sects has more or less departed. This system is adopted by the educated and thoughtful. It is generally ascribed to Vyasa, the great compiler of the Hindu scriptures, but was probably put into form about 500 B.C. The Mahābhārata gives an account of the way in which it was taught by Krishna to his friend Arjuna. Its main doctrines are as follows:—

The nature and attributes of the Divine Being. The Vedantist acknowledges the unity of God, speaks of Him as light, and declares that He is eternal, self-existent, immutable, truthful, perfect, incomprehensible, omniscient, almighty, formless, supremely happy, the sustainer of all things. Men who worship the gross representations of Deity declare Him to be formless, perfect, and pure. This string of attributes is often on the lips of the people, even the ignorant, but their practice shows that they cannot realize their meaning. Vedantism never speaks of God as exercising power except when united to matter. It teaches that He is

"within and without everything." The words of Vyasa are, "The Supreme Being is the material as well as the efficient cause of the universe;" and further, "an effect is not other than its cause." In showing that the supreme Brahma is at once cause and effect, he uses the following amongst other illustrations: "Hair and nails, which are insensible, grow from a sensible animal body." "The sea and its waters are one, yet waves, foam, froth, etc., differ from each other." "As milk changes to curd, and water to ice, so is Brahma variously transformed and diversified."

*Creation.* As the Divine Being is essentially connected with matter, everything visible and invisible in the universe is an emanation from Him. Brahma is the first cause. He educes from himself the materials of creation, as the spider draws out the web from its own body. At first the work is carried on with only partial success by himself; afterwards he works through the Prajāpatis, or progenitors.

*Man.* Man is said to consist of three parts: spirit, which is an essential part of the Supreme Being; and two bodies, a grosser and a more refined one. When the grosser body dies, the spirit continues to inhabit the finer one, and by it the consciousness of its identity is preserved, and the person recognized after death. When the spirit is re-absorbed into Brahma, or re-born into the world, this finer body vanishes.

It should be noticed that the idea of recognition after death is not commonly received by the Hindus. As they bring no reminiscences of past lives into their present life, they carry with them no memory of the present into any future life.

*The Universe.* The universe has three main divisions:—earth, heaven, and hades. Regarding the earth as

the centre, the seven parts of heaven are above, the seven of hades below. Of the seven above the earth, six are to continue for longer or shorter though definite periods, but the highest of all, called Satya Loka (the abode of truth), is eternal, in which there are four kinds of blessedness: Sālokya, dwelling with God; Sārupya, likeness to God; Sājugya, union with God; and Nirvāna, absorption into God. Of the parts under the earth, the lowest is Pātāl, or hell, and is divided by some into twenty-one, by others into twenty-eight parts, the names of which correspond with the vices that are punished there.

A great deal is made of Māyā, or illusion. It is owing to *illusion* that men imagine themselves to be free agents, able to think, speak, and act as they desire; whereas they are impelled by divine forces to act as their Maker desires. All are parts of God, impelled by His subtle power to act in harmony with His will. Enjoyment and suffering are the result of illusion. *Salvation* is gained through a recognition of the relation existing between the soul and God; when its identity is realized, absorption into the Deity follows. Hence it is no uncommon thing to see Hindus for weeks and months together meditating on nothing: making the mind a blank, under the impression that they are qualifying for the highest blessedness man can attain unto. Works of merit are inculcated because happiness in heaven is attached to their performance; whilst evil deeds send a man to hell to suffer the penalties an almighty fiat has attached to them. But in both cases there will be the endurance of other lives on earth until the highest excellence is attained—viz., realization of oneness with the Supreme.

It is an interesting fact that Sankara, the great authority on Hinduism, himself a staunch believer in

the supreme Brahma, as distinct from his three-fold manifestation as Brahmā, Vishnu, and Siva, sent his disciples to teach the more popular forms of faith. He professed to explain this inconsistency by the fact that the mass of the people were not qualified to receive the more intellectual and refined forms of religion. It was on his authority that the Saiva faith was promulgated at Benares, and the Vaishnava at Conjeveram; that others of his disciples taught men to worship the Sun, the Saktis (female deities), and also the more dreadful form of Bhairava. This fact is paraded as a proof of the unity of Hinduism, as one who himself had no faith in these acknowledged lower forms, authorized his disciples to teach them because he considered them better suited to the capacities of the ignorant. There is another explanation—viz., that the teachers of the objectionable forms of worship borrowed the name of this great man to obtain respect for their heretical teaching.

It will be evident to the reader, as he notices the practices of some of the sects now to be described, that they are in direct opposition to what may be termed orthodox Hinduism, as, *e.g.*, where caste rules are disregarded at festivals. Some have arisen through the desire to lower the pretensions and lessen the influence of the Brāhmans. When high caste men join them, they are welcomed, but have to pay the cost of the relinquishment of their privileges by being treated as outcastes by their stricter brethren. At the same time the members are regarded as good Hindus even by those who themselves keep aloof from them. And it often happens that when a man is put out of caste by his old associates, he joins one of these heretical sects, where he is sure of a welcome, and thus finds companions to take the place of

those who have driven him from their midst. Even prostitutes,who are cut off from their family and caste, are not excluded from them all, but are able by their gifts to purchase the sympathies of their fellow-sectaries. The more one looks into it the more clearly is it seen that Hinduism is a most expansive and inclusive system ; those who have carefully studied the question find it difficult to define clearly what Hinduism is—who may and who may not rightly be classed as Hindus. Thus in the Bengal Census Report of 1881 Mr. Beverley says, "What is a Hindu? is a question which has often been asked without eliciting any satisfactory reply. No answer, in fact, exists, for the term in its modern acceptation denotes neither a creed nor a race, neither a church nor a people, but a general expression devoid of precision, and embracing alike the most punctilious disciples of pure Vedantism, the Agnostic youth who is the product of Western education, and the semi-barbarous hillman who eats without scruple anything he can procure, and is as ignorant of the Hindu mythology as the stone he worships in times of sickness and danger." Sir Alfred Lyall, quoted in the same Report, says "that the religion of the non-Mahommedan population of India is as a tangled jungle of disorderly superstitions, ghosts and demons, demi-gods and deified saints, household gods, local gods, tribal gods, universal gods, with their countless shrines and temples, and the din of their discordant rites; deities who abhor a fly's death; those who still delight in human sacrifices." In the following account will be given the peculiarities of the chief sects to one or other of which most of the people belong.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE VAISHNAVA SECTS—THOSE IN WHICH VISHNU IS REGARDED AS THE SUPREME.

MOST of the sects have distinguishing marks, which it is the duty of the initiated to wear. At the festivals, after bathing, the symbols are freshly painted on the forehead, breast, and arms. The Vaishnavas use a white earth called gopichandana, which, to be of the purest description, must be brought from a pool in Dwaraka, in which the gopis, or milkmaids, drowned themselves when Krishna forsook them. A common clay is, however, often substituted for this. As a rule, the marks of the Vaishnava sects are perpendicular, whilst those of the Saivite are horizontal.

1. *The Sri Sampradayis, or Rāmānujas.*

This is the oldest and most respectable of the Vaishnava sects, having been founded about the middle of the twelfth century by Rāmānuja Achārjya. This man is said to have been an incarnation of the great serpent Sesha, whilst his chief companions and disciples are said to have been the embodied discus, shell, lotus, club, etc., the insignia of Vishnu. He taught the tenets of his creed at Conjeveram and afterwards visited Sri Ranga and other places, reclaiming men and temples from the Saiva faith.

On his return to Sri Ranga the dispute between the

rival sects of Vishnu and Siva rose to such a height that the king, a devout Saivite, ordered the Brāhmans in his kingdom to sign an acknowledgment of the superiority of his chosen deity, and by bribery and force was successful with the greater number. Rāmānuja refusing to sign this document, the king sent troops to seize him; but the Brāhman escaped, and took refuge in Mysore. Whilst there he is said to have expelled an evil spirit from a daughter of the king, who thereupon embraced the doctrines of his holy guest. On the death of the king of Sri Ranga, after a stay of twelve years in Mysore, Rāmānuja returned to his former home. The headquarters of this sect are now in the Deccan; and although the founder is said to have set up seven hundred monasteries (maths), only four exist at the present time.

The worship of Rāmānuja's followers is addressed to Vishnu and his consort Lakshmi and their incarnations either singly or conjointly. The teachers are usually Brāhmans, but the disciples may be of any caste. Besides the worship offered in the temples, images of metal and stone are set up in the houses, and the Sālgrāma and Tulsi are also reverenced. The name by which the members are commonly known is Sri Vaishnavas. The chief ceremony of initiation is the communication of the mantra by the guru to the disciple. The initiatory mantra is said to be "Om Rāmāya namah;" *i.e.*, Om salutation to Rāma; but there is great reluctance on the part of the Hindus to give any real information respecting the mantras; the most reliable source of information is that of those once initiated who, having become Christians, are largely free from the fear of evil consequences following the betrayal of the secret.

The chief religious tenet of the Rāmānuja sect is that Vishnu is Brahma, the Supreme Being. By a mere wish he created the universe, which is an emanation from himself. He has manifested himself in five ways—in images, in incarnations, in various forms, as Krishna, etc., in certain qualities, and in the human soul. He is to be worshipped in five ways corresponding to these forms: by cleaning the images and temples, by providing flowers and perfumes for religious rites, by the presentation of these as offerings (bloody sacrifices are hateful to Vishnu), by repeating the name of the deity, and by meditation, the object of which is to unite the soul with the deity; the proper performance of which, it is believed, will give entrance in Vaikuntha, the heaven of Vishnu.

2. *Rāmānandis, or Ramawats.*

Rāmānand, the founder, is said by some to have been a disciple of Rāmānuja, but more probably he was a disciple of a disciple in the fifth descent from that leader. As far as can be definitely known, he flourished about the end of the fourteenth or the beginning of the fifteenth century. The worship of this sect is devoted to Rāmachandra (one of the great incarnations of Vishnu), together with Sita his wife, his half-brother Lakshman, and his faithful friend Hanumān, the commander-in-chief of the monkey army that was raised to assist Rāma to rescue his wife from Rāvana, the demon king of Ceylon. Some of the members regard Rāma as their supreme deity, others prefer Sita; whilst others, again, give equal adoration to the two. The other forms of Vishnu are treated with profound respect by these people, and the Sālgrāma, as his special representation, is worshipped by them.

This sect originated in a very simple manner.

Rāmānand, in obedience to his superior, went about inculcating the doctrines of his sect. On his return to the monastery, some of his fellow-disciples accused him of having violated one of their vital doctrines—viz., the observance of the closest privacy in partaking of his food. The head of the math agreed with the disciples. This so incensed Rāmānand that he started a sect of his own. He lived chiefly at Benares, at the Pancha Ganga Ghat, where his math continued until it was destroyed by the Mussulmāns. At present there is a stone platform, which is said to retain the impression of his feet. In the vicinity of Benares are several maths of this order, and it is there the chief council meets to settle questions connected with it.

The members of these sects are divided into two classes, which answer very nearly to the divisions in the Christian Church called cleric and lay; the clerics, again, are subdivided into monastic and secular. India is the home of the belief of the superior sanctity of the celibate life which was transferred to the Christian Church. The celibates are regarded as superior to the married, and most of them, for a longer or shorter period, wander from shrine to shrine collecting offerings, which, after deducting necessary expenses, are given to the math to which they belong. In order to provide a home for the celibates who do not travel, as well as for those who do, these monasteries are supported, each with its mahant, or superior, who sometimes obtains the position by inheritance, sometimes is chosen by the members of the order, and sometimes the appointment is made by royal patrons, in whose country it is situated. In their main features these monasteries and their uses and government differ very little from similar institutions in the Christian Church of the West. Some mahants exercise

authority over others, much in the same way as the archbishop exercises authority over his bishops.

Rāmānand laid few burdens on his disciples; in fact, he gave them the name Avadhuta, *i.e.* liberated; meaning that they were free from many of the trying ordinances that prevailed in other classes. With respect to eating and bathing he left them free to follow their own inclination. The most important innovation was the virtual abolition of caste. Amongst his most illustrious disciples were a Rājput, a weaver, a chamār (currier), and a barber. He taught that God and his worshippers are one; and as Bhagavān (Vishnu) appeared in inferior forms as a fish, boar, etc., so his worshippers may be in the inferior as well as superior castes. And what is equally remarkable is this, that though the founder of the system did not write any works himself, his followers wrote religious works; not as Rāmānuja and Sankara had done—commentaries on the Vedas for the use of the Brāhmans only—but in the common dialects of the people, and in a popular style, so that they were suited to the capacities of all. Further, it is possible for any of the members, whatever his caste, to rise to the position of a vairāgi (ascetic), a guru (teacher), or mahant (head of a monastery). From the success which attended the efforts of this teacher there is every encouragement to work for the spread of Christian truth. Multitudes at his call left their own particular castes and joined his brotherhood, in which Brāhmans and Chamārs associated as brethren.

There are said to be *twelve* chief disciples of Rāmānand, some of whom, having founded new sects, will be mentioned separately; but a few facts respecting one of the less conspicuous will not be uninteresting.

Pīpa, the Rājput mentioned above, originally

worshipped Devi (Siva's wife), but wishful to become a worshipper of Vishnu, he placed himself under Rāmānand's instruction at Benares. Coming at an inopportune moment, the sage angrily wished that his visitor might fall into a well close by. Pīpa immediately threw himself into it, that his teacher's wish might be fulfilled. This act of submission so pleased the onlookers that they at once gave him the title of Rāja. On a visit to Dwaraka with his master, he plunged into the sea and paid a visit to Vishnu in his submarine shrine, where he was hospitably received. On a journey his wife was carried off by some Pathāns, but Rāma appearing, rescued her and slew the robbers. On another occasion, meeting an angry lion in the forest, he placed his rosary on its neck, and whispering the mantra of the sect (Sri Rāma), made him tranquil in a moment.

3. *Kabir Panthis.*

Of all Rāmānand's disciples, Kabir is the most celebrated. With immense boldness he attacked the whole system of idolatrous worship, ridiculed the learning of the Pundits and the teaching of the Sāstras, and, what is even more remarkable, addressed his remarks to Mussulmāns as well as Hindus, making the Korān equally with the Hindu Scriptures an object of ridicule. It is said that the writings of this man more than any others influenced Nānak, the founder of the Sikh faith.

There are two legends connected with his birth. It is said in the Bhakta Māla that his mother, a Brāhman virgin widow, was taken by her father to see his guru Rāmānand, when the great teacher saluted her with the wish that she might have a son. His words could not be recalled; but as the advent of a son could only be a source of shame, she was privately delivered of her child, which was exposed at its birth, and being found

by a weaver and his wife, it was brought up as their own. The common belief is that a weaver's wife named Nīmā found the child, which was an incarnate deity, floating on a lotus in a lake near Benares. As soon as she took it in her arms it asked to be carried to the holy city. Hearing the infant speak, the woman thought it must be a demon, and, casting it down, ran away; but the child ran faster. At length husband and wife agreed to bring it up as their own.

Kabir flourished about the beginning of the fifteenth century, and a curious story is told of his initiation, which must have taken place before Rāmānand had developed his system. Kabir was refused admission into the sect because of his caste. Standing one day on the ghāt as Rāmānand went to bathe, he touched the sage's foot, who, as a sort of expiatory measure, cried "Rāma, Rāma," the initiatory mantra: from that moment Kabir asserted that he was admitted into the fraternity by the involuntary utterance of the text.

Both Hindus and Mussulmāns claimed Kabir. A story is told to the effect that his mother (in this case said to be a Mussulmani) complained to the Emperor Sekandah, who sent for the son and ordered him to make the usual salām. The young man said, "I know none but Rāma—why should I bow down before a king?" Upon this the emperor ordered him to be cast into the river, but the waters would not drown him. He then tried to burn him, but fire had no effect upon him. He next ordered his elephants to trample on him, but they dared not approach him. At last the king went on his own elephant to slay him, but Kabir transformed himself into a lion, and the king then gave up the attempt. At his death the Hindus wished to burn, and the Mussulmāns to bury his body. As they were

quarrelling about this, Kabir himself appeared and told them to look under the cloth which was supposed to be covering his dead body. They did so, and found only a heap of flowers. Part the Rāja of Benares took and burnt; part the Mussulmāns buried.

As Kabir was a disciple of Rāmānand, this sect is regarded as belonging to the Vaishnavas, though the members need not worship the Hindu deities; and where they do so it is more out of compliance to the wishes of others than from any good they expect from it for themselves. One of their leader's maxims was, "Associate and mix with all, and take the names of all; say to every one, 'Yes, sir; yes, sir;' and abide in your own abode." This certainly is rather a free rendering of the apostolic resolve to be "all things to all men." They do not join in the outward worship of the deities; their chief religious exercise is singing hymns to the invisible Kabir.

The doctrines of this sect are not easily learned; but as far as can be seen they do not differ very much from what is taught in the Purānas, though the way of stating them is somewhat original. They say there is but one God, the Creator of the world, and the pure man, the Sādhu of the Kabirs, is His living resemblance, and after death His associate and equal. All that is has come from God, is a part of Him, therefore God and man are not only the same, but they together form everything that lives and moves. The Supreme Being was alone for seventy-two ages. Desiring to renew the world, the female Māyā sprang forth, from whom all errors among men have arisen. From her union with the Supreme the three great gods, Brahmā, Vishnu, and Siva, have come; and from union with them their brides, Saraswati, Lakshmi, and Umā, were born. Life is the

same in all beings; the great object is to learn the source; for as long as ignorance of this continues, new births must be experienced. Heaven and hell do not actually exist, but are simply some of the delusions of Māyā.

The moral code of this sect is worthy of praise. It teaches that all life is sacred; kindness is therefore a cardinal virtue, whether the object be man or animals. Truth is necessary, and retirement from the world is advantageous to piety; absolute obedience and profound reverence for the guru is especially insisted on. Their abhorrence of violence, love of truth, and unobtrusiveness of life make them most inoffensive members of the community. In North India their numbers are great.

There are a few other sects similar to those already described which require only a brief notice. The *Khakis*. Most of these adopt the ascetic life, besmear their bodies with clay and ashes, wear braided hair, and regard Sitā and Hanumān as their chief objects of worship. The *Maluk Dāsis* take their name from Maluk Dāss; their gurus and most of their members remain in their homes, and do not wander about as do the *Khakis*. The *Dādu Panthis* are an offshoot from Kabir; their worship is also addressed to Rāma, but is restricted to what is called *Japa*, *i.e.* the repetition of his name. The founder of the sect was Dādu, a cotton cleaner. At Narama it is said he heard a voice from heaven calling upon him to live a religious life; accordingly he retired to the Baherana mountain, and, no traces of him being left, he is believed to have been absorbed into the deity. His followers burn their dead at early dawn; but the more religious order their bodies to be left exposed in the open country, as in the funeral pile insect life is apt to be destroyed. The *Rāi Dāsis* are the followers of Rai Dās,

a Chamār, one of the lowest castes of the Hindus, and his followers generally belong to the same caste. It was owing to an imprecation of Rāmānand that a Brahmachāri (student) was born in a Chamār family. At first he refused to take nourishment until Rāmānand, recognizing in him the young man he had cursed, breathed the mantra into his ears and thus admitted him into his sect. From that moment he began to thrive. When he grew to manhood he worked at his trade, and devoted all he could spare to feeding the poor. One day Vishnu, pleased with his devotion, came and offered him the philosopher's stone; but Rai Dās disregarded the gift, as he was well satisfied with the knowledge of Hari (Vishnu). Some months afterwards Vishnu paid him another visit, and seeing that the stone had not been used, caused a number of gold pieces to lie all round him. With these Rai Dās erected a temple of which he became the priest. The *Sena Panthis* are the followers of Sena, a barber; but of the peculiar tenets of this sect little is known. In connection with him a story is told similar in spirit to that in Miss Proctor's "Legend of Provence." This barber being intensely devotional sometimes forgot his professional duties as barber to the king. Vishnu seeing the sovereign's anger, in order to save his servant from punishment, took the barber's place, and did his work so well that the king recognized the god, and made his barber his guru.

*Valabhācharis, or Rudra Sampradayis.* This sect owes its popularity to Vallabha Ācharjya, and is commonly known as the religion of the Gokula Gosains. The original founder of the sect was a Brāhman named Vishnu Swāmi, who admitted only Brāhmans into his society, and imposed on them a vow of asceticism.

But Vallabha greatly extended it by communicating the mantra to men of other castes. This man was a Sanyasi, and flourished about the sixteenth century. Originally he resided at Gokul, near Mathura, then at Vrindāvana, where he lived under a pipul-tree, which is still shown to pilgrims. At Mathura, too, there are traces of him to be found: all these places being connected with various scenes in the life of Krishna. It was at Vrindāvana that he is said to have been honoured by a visit from Krishna himself, who enjoined him to extend his worship under the form of Bala Gopāl (the boy Gopāl). Vallabha is said to have gone to heaven from Benares in a miraculous manner. Entering the river at Hanumān Ghāt, and stooping down to worship, he suddenly disappeared: a brilliant flame arose from the spot, and in the presence of a host of spectators he ascended into heaven.

It is in the Brahmā Vaivartha that the fullest particulars of the childhood of Krishna are found; and though his worship is not commanded, yet, as it speaks of the Creator as a young man, and dwells upon the miraculous doings of his youth, its authority is claimed. According to this book, Krishna has a heaven of his own, called Goloka, high above the heavens of Vishnu and Siva. In this beautiful home lives Krishna in the bloom of youth, in colour like a dark cloud, clad in yellow garments, playing on his flute. Being alone, he meditated on the world; then Māyā, a female form, arose, from whom and himself all beings divine and human came.

Vallabha introduced a remarkable innovation for a Sanyasi, which showed that Epicureanism was not at all confined to Greece. He taught that as privation formed no part of sanctity, God should be worshipped, not by

nudity and hunger, but by costly apparel and good food; not in solitude and with mortification of the body, but in the pleasures of society and in the enjoyment of the world. With the founding of the sect Vallabha gave up his ascetic life, and marrying, advised his disciples to do the same. The gosains, or gurus, have great influence over their disciples, and are well cared for as they travel from shrine to shrine, from disciple to disciple. Most of the adherents of this sect are merchants, and the gosains themselves are not above joining in mercantile transactions. The images of Gopāl that they worship are generally made of metal, and, in the same temple with those of Rādhā and Krishna, Gopāl's representations are also to be seen. The most celebrated temple of Gopāl is in Ājmere. It is said that the image there worshipped transported itself to that place from Mathura. It is the duty of every member of the sect, at least once in their life, to visit this shrine, and a certificate is given to the pilgrims who go there.

*Mīrā Bais.* This is a subdivision of the preceding, found almost exclusively in the west of India; and Mīrā Bāi and Rānachor, a form of Krishna, are held in great veneration by the followers of Vallabha. Mīrā Bāi is the authoress of several poems addressed to Krishna, which are read, with those of Nānak and Kabir, by members of other sects. She was the daughter of a petty Rāja, and became the wife of the Nānā of Udaypore. As her mother-in-law was a devout worshipper of Devi, Siva's consort, and Mīra as devout a worshipper of Krishna, quarrels arose, the result being that the younger lady had a separate establishment, in which she was free to carry on her religious practices unmolested. She continued to adore Rānachor, and visited the scenes of Krishna's exploits, and became the

protector of his followers throughout her husband's kingdom. During her absence a persecution of Krishna's worshippers breaking out, a number of Brāhmans were despatched to bring her home. Before leaving Dwaraka she went to visit Rānachor's temple; the deity was so pleased with her that the image opened; she threw herself into it, and was never seen again. At Udaypore an image of Mīrā is to be seen beside one of Krishna.

*Madhwacharis.* This sect forms a sort of connecting link between the Vaishnavas and Saivas. Their founder, Mādhava, who is said to have been an incarnation of the god Vāyu, was born about the twelfth century. At first he appears to have been a member of a Saiva sect, but afterwards forsook it for the Vaishnavas. Unlike most men who change their beliefs, he was no bigot; hence in the temples frequented by the members of this sect we find images of Siva, Durgā, and Ganesa, side by side with those of Vishnu. One great peculiarity of his teaching was that the human spirit (Jivātma), though united to and dependent on the Paramātma, or Divine Spirit, is yet distinct from it; hence final absorption into the Godhead is impossible. This is a most marked departure from the orthodox creed.

*The Vaishnavas of Bengal.* The greater part of the Vaishnavas of Bengal, about 8,000,000 in number, and forming one-fifth of the Hindu community, belong to the sect of which Chaitanya, a Brāhman of Nadiya, was the founder. This man developed and proclaimed with singular earnestness a system which had been partially elaborated by two men named Adaityananda and Nityānanda. Being householders, and indisposed to lead an ascetic life, they needed an active co-labourer to propagate their doctrines throughout the country. And in selecting Chaitanya they made a happy choice; for a

more earnest and self-denying man than he has not been often seen; whilst the success which to this day attends the proclamation of his peculiar views affords a notable example of the great innovations in faith and practice that an earnest-minded man can produce amongst the religiously conservative people of India.

According to popular belief, he was an incarnation of Krishna, who appeared in this form for the purpose of leading men to worship him. He was born in the year 1485, just two years after Luther. It is stated that before and at his birth his parents had many indications that the child was no ordinary mortal, and that the gods came down to visit him. Numerous stories of his miraculous knowledge and power are told, and others illustrating the character of his teaching. One day, when his mother offered him sweetmeats to eat, he took up some clay, as he said that there was no difference between them. When his attention was called to the fact that he was standing in an unclean place, and ordered to wash in the Bhagirathi river, he refused, because all places were alike holy.

When a boy he was well taught in the village school, himself became a teacher, and, when his father died, performed the funeral ceremonies according to the ritual. But very soon after this the lessons of a book he carefully read, the Sri Bhāgavata, were realized by him in an extraordinary degree, so that for hours together he meditated on Krishna, and, impelled by a mighty enthusiasm, preached of the intense joy he found in the contemplation of and devotion to that deity. It is a curious fact that whilst Chaitanya himself was an ardent worshipper of Krishna, he should now be regarded as an incarnation of that deity. At times, his followers declare, he appeared as

the four-armed Krishna, to the great delight of his disciples.

The Vaishnavas, with Chaitanya as president, were in the habit of spending hours together in talking over the life and singing songs in honour of Krishna, until earth became as heaven. On one of these occasions Chaitanya urged his companions to go from house to house until all the inhabitants of Nadiya should know the bliss that was within their reach. This was too hard a task for the new disciples, so on the following morning a procession was formed with Chaitanya at the head, and the whole company marched singing through the streets. All came out to see and hear, and amongst them, two noted enemies of the Vaishnava worship. Chaitanya prayed that the divine weapon Sudarshan might destroy them; but on being asked by a follower to show love rather than hate, the prayer was changed, and through heavenly blessings the hearts of the opponents were melted, and they became followers of the new faith. The conversion of these men, perhaps as much as anything, led to greater earnestness on the part of the disciples, and to the conviction on the part of the Hindus generally that it was their interest to regard this new movement with favour rather than opposition.

When he was twenty-four years of age Chaitanya forsook his family and became an ascetic. It was his duty, he felt, to visit the great shrines, and there preach the tenets of his system. As he was travelling towards Puri, the shrine of Jagannātha, he was so overpowered with a sense of the ignorance and sin of men, that he was almost ready to drown himself. On arriving at the great temple, he sat for hours before the image and "saw" the god and all his glory—a sure sign that he

was pure, as it is only to the eyes of the pure that this deity is said to manifest himself. Whilst at Puri he spent his time largely in speaking of the glories of Krishna, and many pilgrims went back with their hearts fired with love to Chaitanya's chosen god. From Puri he went to the extreme south of India, to the places rendered sacred as the scene of Rāma's exploits. On his way he gained many disciples.

On his return to Puri the people were delighted, and at the next Car Festival his influence was most marked. He divided his followers into four companies, who sang, danced, and played their music on the four sides of the great car as it moved along; but the leader himself was said to be present in all four companies at once, whilst the god looked down with delight at the devotion of his servant. At the close of the day, when the powers of elephants and men were exhausted, and it was found impossible for them to drag the car, Chaitanya touched it with his head, and it moved easily along.

After remaining some four years at Puri, Chaitanya returned to Bengal, where he confirmed the faith of his disciples, and then started for Vrindāvana and Mathura, the scenes of Krishna's earthly life. Marvellous are the accounts given of the power the name of Krishna exerted on beasts and men when uttered by him. "The lord passed through herds of tigers, elephants, rhinoceroses, and wild boars." His companion was astonished to see those furious beasts keep a respectful distance from the Mahāprabhu. One day his foot touched a tiger that was sleeping by the side of the road. The lord said "Krishna, Krishna," at the sound of which the tiger danced for joy. On another occasion, as he was bathing in a river, a number

of wild elephants came there to drink. Chaitanya, throwing water at them, said, "Repeat the name of Krishna;" on which all the elephants shouted "Krishna! Krishna!" and, moved by faith and love, danced and sang. As he sang flocks of deer attended him on either side to hear the delightful sound. Some tigers then joined the company, and when the lord said, "Say Krishna," deer and tigers with this name on their lips danced with delight. Tigers and deer embraced each other, and forgot their natural animosity. Peacocks attended him on his journey, and even plants, vegetables, and minerals were glad, and showed signs of rejoicing as he sang the praises of Krishna. At Benares and Allāhabād he made converts; whilst at Mathura, the home of Krishna, the animal and vegetable worlds were convulsed with joy, and manifested their pleasure in a marvellous manner. The writer of the book declares that "ten millions of volumes will not suffice to describe the transports of Mahāprabhu in Vrindāvana." After this journey he returned to Puri, where he remained for the rest of his life. During the years that followed it is clear that he had periodic fits of insanity, in which he fancied himself to be Krishna, and in imagination went through many of the incidents in that hero's life. Now he was dancing with the milkmaids, now conversing with Rādhā, and at last, in one of these fits, he walked into the sea under the impression that it was the river Jumna, the scene of Krishna's amusements, and was drowned.

The following is an outline of the theology of the Vaishnavas who follow Chaitanya's teaching.

Krishna is the Paramātma, the supreme soul, and the supreme object of worship. There is but one substance in the universe, viz., Krishna, the earth being only a

modification of him. Siva and Brahmā manifested a *part* only of the Divine Being, but Krishna is God Himself. A peculiarity of the creed of this sect lies in the stress placed upon *bhakti*, or faith. The Vedantists teach that knowledge will save; other popular systems say, "Perform penance," meditate, "Do good works;" but Chaitanya said, "Trust Krishna." "The efficacy of good works, austerity, and knowledge, is nothing compared with that of bhakti. Without bhakti there can be no deliverance." Simple bhakti without knowledge, whatever be the object of this blind and implicit faith, will insure salvation. The Vaishnavas maintain that anything, a log of wood, a plant, etc., believed by the devotee to be Krishna or Chaitanya, becomes to him such, and ensures his happiness in the realms of heaven. There are five degrees of this bhakti: *Sānta*, or peace. This, the lowest form, is the calm, unimpassioned contemplation of the deity. *Dāsya*, or servitude. When this is attained, the heart is more animated, the mind is more active, and the affections are warmer. This leads to a vow of service, and the position of him who offers it is as that of a slave to his master. *Sākya*, or friendship. When he attains to this height, the devotee no longer regards Krishna as his master, but as his personal friend, whom he is impelled to please because of the love he bears towards him. *Bātsālya*, or filial affection, is that degree of affection which is recognized as natural in a child towards its father; the childlike trust which leads its possessor to look up to Krishna and say, Thou art my father. The last form of this bhakti is called *Mādhurya* or sweetness; and the illustration given of this is the love which the milkmaids of Vrindāvana bore towards the hero when he was residing in their midst, the

highest type of all being that which Rādhā had for her lord.

Vaikantha is the heaven of the Vaishnavas, wherein they hope to be united to, or rather identified with, Krishna, and then reign for ever. Others seem rather to expect a separate existence in heaven.

Amongst the most important duties as taught by the Vaishnavas is that of "*Guru Pādāsraya*," or the taking refuge under a guru. The gurus in Vaishnava sects are not necessarily Brāhmans, but the adoration claimed by them is even greater than that demanded by ordinary Brāhmans. The chief work of the guru is giving the mantra, or text. The following texts teach the authority of the guru. "The mantra is manifest in the guru, and the guru is Hari himself." Krishna says, "The guru is first to be worshipped." "When Hari is angry, the guru is our protector; when the guru is angry, we have no protector."

The next important duty is *Nāma Kirton*, *i.e.* the repetition of the name of the deity. The common formula in Bengal is this: Hari Krishna, Hari Krishna Krishna, Krishna Hari, Hari Hari Rāma, Hari Rāma Rāma, Rāma Hari Hari.

Next in order is the *Sankirtān*. This is a public act, in which a number join in singing the praises of Krishna. It is noisy, irreverent, often indecent; the singing is frequently accompanied by dancing.

One of the most important duties is the *Mahatsava* (great joy). This is a feast which is held at the death of some gosain or mahant, or any great personage amongst the community. At these feasts no caste regulations are observed. All who come eat together. The presiding gosain takes a little food from a dish; what is left is mixed with the other food, and the whole

becomes *prasād,* or sacred. To eat this is a work of great merit. But the most valued food of the whole feast is that which has been left by the gosain on his plate, a few grains of which are given to those who are specially holy and devout.

It is a work of merit to hear the Bhāgavata read by the kathaks, or professional readers, and it is amongst the Vaishnavas especially that they find employment. What Benares is to the ordinary Hindu, Mathura is to the Vaishnava; residence there is believed to be productive of indescribable benefits.

The chief tendency of Chaitanya's teaching was to break down caste. Any Hindu can receive the mantra, and even Mussulmāns have been received into the community. The Vairāgis, or ascetics, of whatever caste, eat together, but the secular members, except on festival days, do not disregard these distinctions to so great an extent.

From the main body of Chaitanya's followers are two classes that may be regarded as seceders from it. The *Spashtha Dyāks* differ chiefly with respect to the authority of the gurus. They deny their divinity. Men and women live together in convents, professedly in the relation of brothers and sisters. The men act as gurus to each other, and the women are gurus to the female members of the community. All the members of this branch lead the ascetic life. The *Kartha Bhojas* are a very modern sect, founded by Rāma Taran Pāl of Ghoshpāra. Its teaching goes to the other extreme on this question. It teaches that the gurus are none other than Krishna himself, and he in the person of the gurus becomes the chosen deity of his followers. Its main teaching is summed up in the following: "Attach yourself to your guru, speak the truth, follow the counsels of your guru."

Besides these there are a few less influential sects; the particulars in which they differ from the ordinary worshippers of Vishnu only will be given.

*Rādhā Vallabhis* are those who, whilst worshipping Krishna, prefer to give their chief adoration to Rādhā, his chief mistress according to some, or his heavenly bride according to others. It is said that it was owing to a curse that Rādhā, his celestial spouse, became a milkmaid upon earth, and on this ground his criminal intercourse with her is defended. *Sakhi Bhavas.* The members, in order to show their great regard for Rādhā in preference to her husband, not only adopt women's dress, but also the manners and occupation of women. They are few in number, and not very respectable. *Charan Dāsis.* This sect was founded by a merchant named Charan Dās. At first he taught that no representative of deity should be worshipped; he even repudiated the Sālgrāma and Tulsi. Gradually, however, innovations have been made, and the objects common to other Vaishnavas are now freely worshipped. He taught, further, that good works are of equal value with faith; that a man's works determine his final condition. *Sanyasis.* This name, though usually employed to denote ascetics of the Saivya faith, is also used with the qualifying word Tridandi for a class of Vaishnavas of the Rāmānuja sect who have passed through the first two stages of the Brāhmanical order, and have entered upon the ascetic life. The word *danda* signifies a staff, and the Tridandi Sanyasis are those who have taken up the three-fold staff; *i.e.* have exercised a three-fold restraint of speech, body, and mind, or word, deed, and thought. These men do not touch metals or fire, and cannot, therefore, cook their own food, but depend upon the generosity of the pious Brāhmans of the other orders

of the Sri Vaishnava sect. *Vairāgis.* These are the ascetics of the Rāmānand sect described above. They have no employment and no fixed abode, but wander from shrine to shrine, and from one monastery to another, dependent upon the gifts of the faithful. *Nāgas.* All the great Hindu sects have a division of nāgas, *i.e.* those who carry their religious earnestness to an extreme length. These men discard all clothing; and though regarded as saints by the community, are known to be a most dissolute set of men. At some religious festivals hundreds of them walk in procession absolutely naked, in the presence of thousands of men and women.

# CHAPTER IV.

## THE SAIVITE SECTS—THOSE WHO REGARD SIVA AS THE SUPREME DEITY.

THE worship of Siva has little of the attractive element that we have noticed in connection with the Vaishnava sects. It is mostly confined to Brāhmans and those who are influenced by them. In North India there are no legends to lead men to select him as their chosen deity; no popular works written to lead men to him; no breaking down of the caste rules as an inducement for the more despised classes to unite themselves with the Saivite sects. There are many temples sacred to Siva, in which he is represented by the linga; but as a rule they are not popular shrines, as are those of Krishna, Jagannātha, etc. It is different, however, with his consort Parvati, Durgā, Kāli in the many forms under which she is worshipped. Siva is rather a repulsive, dreadful being, and it is fear mainly which impels men to approach him. It is as the husband of Parvati that men present him with gifts, rather than for anything that is attractive in his character and conduct. Krishna appeals to the human instincts of men, and his worship is a bright and joyous thing; whilst Siva is the embodiment of that which is stern, cruel, and powerful. At the same time, it must be borne in mind that fear

drives many whom love fails to draw. And as a result there are few villages without a shrine of the great god.

There are no great sects similar to those connected with Vishnu ; the worshippers of Siva for the most part agree in faith and practice. There are, however, classes of ascetics whose precepts differ somewhat from those of the great mass of Saivites which call for notice. It is evident that Vaishnavism is more recent than Saivism ; and the leaders having broken away from the older and more stereotyped forms, there has been greater latitude in the formation of creed and ritual.

The great authority in matters connected with Siva-worship is Sankara Ācharjya. This man was born at Kerala, or Malabar, and by some is declared to have been an incarnation of the god. Others say that he was the child of an adulterous union, for which his mother was outcasted. For some reason he appears to have been unpopular, and when his mother died, the Brāhmans of the neighbourhood would not attend her funeral ceremonies, or give him any sacred fire to light her pyre. Sankara obtained this by rubbing his arm, and having burned the body in the courtyard of his house, declared that Brāhmans should no longer read the Vedas there, that religious mendicants should not obtain alms, and that the dead should be burned near the house where they had lived. After this he lived an ascetic life, and was engaged in controversy with the leaders of other sects.

*The Dandis, or Staff-bearers.* These, and the Tridandis mentioned before, are the legitimate representatives of the fourth Āsrama, or the ascetic stage, into which the orthodox Brāhman's life is divided. It is competent for any one to take up the ascetic life at any period,

without going through the previous stages of student, householder, and hermit.

The Dandi is known by his staff, with a piece of red cloth attached, in which his Brāhmanical cord is carried. He wears only a small cloth round his waist, and his head and face are cleanly shaven; he begs his food from the houses of Brāhmans, and ought to live alone, near, though not in, a city. They have no particular time for, or form of worship, and their chief employment is meditation; in fact, it is mere existence, not life, that they regard as the perfect state. Siva, under the name of Bhairava (the terrible), is their chief deity, into whose worship they are initiated by a small incision in the arm, the blood from the wound being offered as a sacrifice. The Dandis do not burn, but bury their dead, or throw them into sacred streams.

Originally the profession was open to men of the three highest castes only; now many of the lowest castes assume the dress and life on special occasions for a few days. To an outsider it seems to be an idle and miserable life. More sleepy and dirty specimens of humanity than these *holy* men one has never seen. But the honour given in this life, and the hope of heavenly reward, are sufficient to allure men from work and home and family to lead a wandering life. These blessings have an attraction that the uninitiated cannot understand.

*The Dasnāmi Dandis.* The name of this sect is given because the members are divided into *ten* classes, after the ten chief disciples of Sankara, and are regarded as the legitimate descendants of the fraternities founded by him. The chief difference between them and the Dandis is that at first they admitted Brāhmans only to their fellowship. Of the ten classes, four only are regarded as true to their founder's doctrine. The chief

deviation of the other six, who bear the name of atits, or guests, is this: they have given up the use of the staff; they wear clothes and ornaments, prepare their own food, and admit other than Brāhmans to their order.

*The Yogis.* This is another class of religious mendicants. The name signifies one who meditates, and meditation has always been regarded by the Hindus as the most sacred of religious duties. The Yogis of the present day profess to be the descendants of men who in olden time possessed immense influence over the people. The main object of the Yogi was to concentrate his attention until he had come to regard himself as one with the supreme spirit. Methods by which this state of perfection can be attained are carefully taught in the Hindu Scriptures. The Yogi must breathe in a particular manner, sit in eighty-four different postures, fix his eye on the tip of the nose, and meditate on Siva. The Scriptures describe some marvellous effects which follow mental abstraction. They declare the Yogis can make themselves lighter than the lightest, and heavier than the heaviest substances, can magnify or lessen their forms at will, can instantaneously travel immense distances, reanimate corpses by breathing their own spirit into them, render themselves invisible, and see the past, present, and future at a glance. Nowadays these men act as fortune-tellers and conjurors, and impose upon the ignorance and credulity of the people. No doubt many of them are clever jugglers. The founder of the sect was named Goraknātha, and his disciples are called Kānphati, because at their initiation they have their ears pierced. At Gorakhpore there is a temple and a math of the order. Tradition says the original temple was erected by Siva himself in the Treta age of the Hindus

which answers to the silver age of the classics. The present temple is of modern date, and in an adjacent math the superior of the order resides. Many assume their dress and manners, and practise as conjurors without taking religious vows, or making any pretensions to a religious life.

*Jangamas.* This class of Saivites is distinguished by the fact that they wear a representation of the linga on their bodies or in their dress. In North India they are often accompanied by a bull to represent Siva's favourite animal, Nandi; but in South India, where their numbers are large, they are known as Lingayets, and the priests of the Siva temples generally belong to it. The founder of the sect was named Bāsava, and was said to be an incarnation of Nandi, the bull of Siva. At his master's command this faithful servant came to resuscitate his worship.

The Bāsava Purāna, as the book is called in which the history of this revival of Siva-worship is given, contains some wonderful legends of its benefits. On one occasion Bāsava, who had been profuse in gifts to the members of his sect, was accused of embezzlement; but when the royal treasury was opened it was found that the minister's gifts had not diminished the treasures. A fellow-casteman, living with a dancing-girl, sent to Bāsava's house for his daily supply of rice. The servant spoke so strongly of the richness of the dress of the minister's wife that the cupidity of the dancing-girl was excited. Her lord, therefore, asked Bāsava for it. The minister ordered his wife to give it up; but, as she took it off, another equally beautiful sprang from her body, which was also given. It is taught that Bāsava was escorted to heaven by Siva and Parvati themselves, who came to show their respect.

*Paramhansas.* The Paramhansa is the most eminent of the Saivite ascetics; he is supposed to be solely occupied with meditation on the deity, is indifferent to pleasure or pain, insensible to heat or cold, and incapable of satiety or want. In proof of this he goes naked, never speaks, and never asks for anything he wants. They have attendants, who collect what is necessary for them, and feed them as they would a child. Of course some make a gain by their professed sanctity, but some, so far as one can see, believe that they are right in adopting this mode of life.

*Aghoris.* These differ from the former in this respect: that whilst the Paramhansa does not parade his virtues, the Aghoris make their supposed sanctity a reason for liberal almsgiving. The worship of the Aghoris seems to have been devoted to the female powers, or Devi, in one of her many forms, and to have demanded human victims. The members of the sect formerly carried a staff set with bones, and a human skull for a drinking pot. Though this has ceased, a few miserable wretches go about the country professing to belong to the sect; and, as a proof of their indifference about worldly objects, eat whatever is given them, even carrion. In order to extort money they gash their limbs, that the crime of blood-letting may rest upon those who refuse to give them alms.

In addition to the above classes are a few less known who practise austerities of various kinds, from which their names are taken. The *Urddhabāhus* (holders up of arms) are those who stand in one posture for years, holding one or both their arms above the head until the muscles become contracted and they cannot bring them down again. Some close their fists, and allow their nails to grow through their hands. The *Ākāsmukhis*

are those who turn their faces towards the sky until the muscles of the neck become fixed, and they cannot change this painful position. The peculiarity of the *Nakhis* is that they allow their nails to grow without being cut. The *Gūdaras* travel about with a small pan of metal, in which they burn sandal and other scented wood in the houses they visit collecting alms; their method of asking alms being the mere repetition of the work Alakh, meaning that God's nature is incapable of being described; He is without any marks or distinctive features. The *Sūkharas*, *Rūkharas*, *Ukharas* have nothing distinctive save their dress, except the last-named, who drink spirituous liquors and eat meat. The *Nāgas* go naked, allow their hair and beards to grow, use arms, and seem ready to take part in any row; in fact, it is a sort of professional vagabond life that these men elect. It will be noticed that all the ascetic sects of the Saivas are celibates.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE SAKTAS—THOSE DEVOTED TO THE WORSHIP OF THE FEMALE DEITIES.

IT has been estimated that of the Hindus in Bengal about three-fourths are devoted to the worship of Sakti; *i.e.* the power or energy of God as represented in many female forms. Of the remaining quarter, three parts are Vaishnavas, and the remainder mostly Saivas. Each deity has his consort, to whom the worship of the people is often more freely given than to her husband. Thus Brahmā, the creator, is neglected; but Saraswati, his wife, is regularly worshipped as the patroness of learning. Lakshmi, Rādhā, and Sitā, are, to say the least, as popular as their lords; whilst the many forms of Parvati, Durgā, Kāli, attract far more attention from the people in Bengal than her consort. And as the worshipper of Vishnu, or Siva, declares that his particular object of worship is the supreme, from whom all the other gods derive their origin, the devotees of the goddesses have no hesitation in saying the same of them. They are likened to the active energy of the soul, and to the power of burning in the fire. The Supreme Being wishing to create, divided himself into two parts; the one became Brahmā, the other Prākriti, or nature; and as from Brahmā all males, so from Prākriti all females sprung. But as without the female

the male is unproductive, she is regarded as the real force in nature, hence the almost exclusive adoration that is paid to the female deities by so many. In some of the Purānas the adoration of Prākriti or Sakti, the energy of the gods, under the forms of Saraswati, Lakshmi, Durgā, etc., is authorised to some extent; but it is in the more modern books called Tantras that this is chiefly upheld. It is probable some of these were written almost as early as the later Purānas, but most of them are not older than the eleventh century. There are two divisions of the sect, the Dakshinas, or right-hand worshippers, and the Vāmācharis, or left-hand worshippers. But less is known of these sects than of others, because the Tantras have been kept in greater secrecy than most of the other sacred books.

The *Dakshinas*, or right-hand worshippers, are those who worship the female deities in an open, public manner, in accordance with the Purānic ritual, and free from gross impurities. There is a fundamental difference in the offerings made to Vishnu in his incarnations, and those made to the many forms of the wife of Siva; viz., to the former all life is sacred, whilst to the latter life is sacrificed. On the festival days at Kāli Ghāt, near Calcutta, and at other popular shrines, the yard streams with the blood of the kids and buffaloes that have been slain. And in Hindu homes it is customary to offer similar gifts. One of the Purānas declares that whilst animal sacrifices gratify Durgā, the sacrificer is guilty of sin for the destruction of life. To the follower of Vishnu the scenes witnessed at a Durgā or Kāli Puja must be most repulsive, and the worshippers regarded as sinful. The offerers of animal sacrifices can plead the authority of the Vedas and the customs of their remote ancestors, and it is probably the sanction that is

given in those works to this practice that has led many of the Vaishnavas to regard them with little respect. The reason assigned for the presentation of blood is this. When the goddess was weary in her conflict with the demons she came to destroy, she drank the blood of her slaughtered foes. By the sight of blood the satisfaction she had when refreshed by that draught is brought to mind, and, being in a benignant mood, she will bestow blessings upon her worshippers. It should be noticed that it is only to the consort of Siva, not to himself, that animal sacrifices are offered.

The *Vāmācharis*. The members of this sect worship the goddesses in accordance with the instructions of the Tantras. Their services are secret, only the initiated being admitted. They worship Devi (the Sakti of Siva), Lakshmi, Saraswati, the Mātris (*i.e.* the mothers), Yoginis, and Dākinis (a sort of ghost, or demon), Siva himself, under the form of Bhairava, being sometimes joined with his consort at their feasts. The aim of the worshippers is to obtain supernatural powers in this life, and reunion with the deity after death. Their worship varies with the object to whom it is directed, but it generally includes one or all of the following: the offering of flesh, fish, wine, union with women, and mystical gesticulation.

When it is desired to interview a spirit, a corpse is necessary. The inquirer must visit a cemetery or burning ghāt alone at midnight, and, seated upon a corpse, make the necessary offerings. If he can do this without fear, the Bhutas (spirits), Yoginis, and other goblins become his slaves.

The principal ceremonies are not, however, performed in solitude, but by the members of the sect together, with a naked woman as the representative of Sakti.

The ceremony is followed by drunken and sensual orgies. The members are numerous, especially amongst the Brāhmans. The following is one form of the ritual as far as it can be published. The object of worship at the ceremony must be a dancing-girl, a female devotee, a harlot, a washerwoman, a barber's wife, a female of the Brāhmanical or Sudra caste, a flower girl, or a milkmaid. The worship commences at midnight with a party of eight, nine, or eleven couples of men and women. According to the person selected for the Sakti, appropriate texts are fixed by the ritual. She must be disrobed, but adorned with jewels, and is rendered pure by the repetition of mantras. After this she is sprinkled with wine, and, if not previously initiated, receives the initiatory text. The rites then proceed, but if the reports of them are correct, they are quite unfit for description here. It is only right to say that the Hindus generally repudiate the doings of this sect, and regard them as evil. Part of the teaching is not written, but taught verbally to the initiated, who in their turn become the instructors of new members.

The *Kiratis*. These are the worshippers of Devi in her most terrible form as Kapālika, who in former times was propitiated by human victims. As these cannot now be offered, her votaries seek to please her by giving their own blood. They cut themselves with knives, lance their tongues and cheeks, and, as long as the law permitted, swung from bamboos with hooks fastened in their bodies, and threw themselves upon knives fixed upright on the ground. At the present time these practices are resorted to after a fashion; cords are tied round the waist, in which the hooks are caught, and the knives are so arranged that as a man falls on them, they lie flat upon the ground. Before the Government

interfered, these cruel rites were practised, and many were seriously injured by them. When I have seen men lacerating themselves it appeared to be rather from the hope of gain than from devotion that they did it. In every case they were intoxicated with a preparation of hemp. But whatever the motive, at the great festivals there are plenty ready to suffer, and, were it permitted, would run the risk of permanent injury to themselves from these frightful modes of worship.

## CHAPTER VI.

### MISCELLANEOUS SECTS.

*Saurapatas.* These are Hindus who regard Surya (the sun) as the supreme deity. Nowadays they are few, though at one time they were more numerous. On Sundays, and on the days when the sun passes from one zodiacal sign to another, they eat but one meal, and that without salt. They never eat until they have seen the sun.

*Ganapatyas* are those who regard Ganesa as the supreme. All Hindus worship Ganesa, along with other deities ; but there are a few who place him as head over all, and direct their worship almost exclusively to him. It is difficult to see why this should be done ; for although he is regarded as the god of wisdom, he is not credited with many marvellous works.

*Sikhs.* The religion of the Sikhs is an offshoot from Hinduism. The word Sikh is a corruption of the word Sishya, meaning a disciple. The founder of the religion was Nānak, who was born at Lahore in the year 1469, to whom succeeded nine Pontiffs, of whom Govinda was the most influential. The aim of Nānak was to lead Hindus and Mussulmāns to recognize what was essential in the religion of each, and to treat with indifference non-essentials. He recognized the divinity of the Hindu deities, and acknowledged the inspiration

of Mahomet. The chief tenets of the system as taught by Govinda were these: To worship One Supreme Being, to eschew superstition, to practise strict morality, and to live by the sword. He moulded his followers into one of the bravest people of the East, enabling them to become a distinct nation and fight until they gained their freedom. The gurus claim to be true Kshetriyas. There are seven classes of Sikhs, each having some slight modification of creed and ritual; the following only need special mention: The *Udāsis* (solitary), as their name implies, profess to be indifferent to worldly vicissitudes, and dwell in sangats, or colleges. They regard themselves as true and genuine followers of Nānak. They do not think it incumbent upon them to despise good food and clothing; nor is celibacy a necessary ordinance, though many of them are unmarried. Their office consists largely in reading and expounding the works of Nānak and Govinda, and others that have been previously mentioned in the description of the Vaishnava sects. At the close of the services in which they have been read the presiding Udāsi gives a feast from the prasād, *i.e.* food offered to the idols which were worshipped along with the books. The main object to be effected by this is benevolence and self-denial, and, in common with other Hindus, they look for deliverance from the delusions of Māyā, through which they regard themselves as distinct from the Godhead. The creed is very similar to that of Kabir. The *Suthreh Shahis* are a wandering sect, who carry two sticks, which they strike together as a means of asking alms. They are a dissolute set of men, and are regarded as a disgrace to the community by the genuine Sikhs. *Govinda Singhas.* It was the founder of this sect who changed the Sikh religion and made it a strong

political institution. He welcomed Hindus and Mussulmāns alike, who took up the sword in his cause. He professedly ignored the distinctions of caste, though he paid great reverence to Brāhmans, and allowed them to continue to worship Hindu deities. His followers regard the work of their leader, the Das Padshali Ki Grantha, as their authority in religious matters. The *Nirmalas* are an ascetic, contemplative class, who live alone, but are frequently found at the Hindu shrines. The *Nāgas* differ little from the preceding class, excepting in the fact that they wander about the country naked.

The *Jains*. The leading tenets of the Jains, and those which distinguish them from the main body of the Hindus, are the following: They deny the divine origin and infallible authority of the Vedas; they hold that certain saints have, by a life of purity and self-mortification, attained not only to an equality with, but even superiority over, the deities commonly worshipped by the Hindus; and they show excessive regard for all forms of animal life. It will be noticed that in the first two articles of their creed they agree with the Buddhists, though the calendar of saints who have attained to this exalted position differs in the two great sects. The disregard which both the Jains and Buddhists manifest for the Vedas leads to the neglect of the rites they prescribe. The chief reason for this is that the Vedas sanction animal sacrifices; and the Homa, or burnt-offering of ghi, is repugnant to their feelings, because insects may be burned to death that are crawling on the ground, or are hidden in the ghi.

The Jains (*i.e.* the worshippers of the Jinas) reverence twenty-four Tirthankaras, or deified mortals of a past age, twenty-four of the present, and twenty-four who

have to attain this honour. These, they affirm, are greater than even the chief deities of the Hindu Pantheon. Statues of them in black or white marble are in their temples. They are all of the same style of feature, calmness being their chief characteristic, and the temples are superior to those of the orthodox Hindus. The saints generally worshipped by the Jains of North India are Parisnātha and Mahavir, the twenty-third and twenty-fourth of the present race of saints.

The previous Jinas, or saints, are said to have been of colossal height, and to have lived for millions of years; but as the two last mentioned are of ordinary size, and lived for the ordinary term of life, it is generally admitted that they were historical personages, the others being the offspring of a fertile imagination, employed to carry back the origin of the sect into a remote antiquity. These deified saints lived on earth as ordinary mortals through several lives until they finally attained to union with the supreme. It is uncertain when the sect was formed, but probably it is of later origin than Buddhism.

The Jains hold that existences are divisible into two classes, Jiva and Ajiva; *i.e.* life and not-life. Their forms may change, but they are imperishable. All beings possessed of Jiva are of two kinds: those which can move and those which cannot. In the first class are included men, animals, demons, and gods; in the second are the four elements, earth, water, fire, air, and the vegetable kingdom. According to the actions of each during its present life will the next be higher or lower. A man's evil deeds may cause him next to appear as one of the lower animals. If his life be made up of virtue and vice, he will be born again as a man; if his life is virtuous only, he ascends to heaven, and after passing through various stages of probation, finally

obtains emancipation from future separate existence. This is in accord with the teaching of the Hindu system.

In the class Ajiva we find time, religion, etc., enumerated. Religion is composed of many elements, the chief of which are the following: *Punya,* religious merit—whatever is of benefit to human beings. As the nearest approach to this are the works of supererogation of the Romish Church; *i.e.* works not essential to salvation, but the performance of which will conduce to the spiritual advancement of the doer. *Pāp* (sin), the opposite of Punya. Of these there are 1082; but it is noticeable that these are not moral offences, merely the violation of some arbitrary caste rules. For although in some parts of India caste rules are partially disregarded by them, in other parts, the Jains are as scrupulous in such matters as the orthodox Hindus. *Moksha,* or liberation of the spirit from the bonds of action; exemption from the necessity of being again born into the world. It is not clear in what state the liberated spirit will continue to live. It is, however, not incompatible, in the opinion of the Jains, with the enjoyment of Nirvāna, which means "gone out," as a fire; "set," as a sun; "defunct," as a saint who has passed away enjoys repose. "It is not annihilation, but unceasing apathy, which they regard as supreme felicity, worthy to be sought by the practice of mortification as well as by the acquisition of knowledge."

The Jains are divided into two classes: Yātis, the clerical, and Srāvakas, or lay members. Implicit belief in the teaching and life of the Tirthankaras is considered a necessary part of their religious system. Their moral code is summed up in five laws: refraining from injury to life, truth, honesty, chastity, and freedom from worldly

desires. There are four dharmas, or works of merit: liberality, gentleness, piety, and penance; and three kinds of restraint, viz. that of the mind, tongue, and person. Some minor instructions are somewhat ludicrous. Water must be twice strained before it is drunk, lest any living creature should be in it; and no liquid must be left uncovered, lest an insect should fall in and be drowned. And that they may not swallow a fly, they must never eat in the dark. The very religious members generally wear a piece of gauze over their lips, lest in breathing they should kill an insect; and for the same reason a brush is used to sweep a seat before sitting upon it.

The ritual of the Jains is very simple. The Yātis, or devotees, can worship in the temples or not; but the laymen must visit a temple at least once a day, and walk three times round the building; then bow to the image, offer a flower, and repeat a short text. In ordinary life they are not purer than their Hindu neighbours. The builder of one of their most beautiful temples has his own house decorated in a most indecent manner. The priests officiating at the temples are generally Brāhmans, and whilst acknowledging the deity of the Hindu gods, they devote their chief worship to the deified saints.

It is possible that the Jains were a sect of Buddhists, but it seems more likely that they are a remnant of that sect, whose leaders, at a time of religious toleration, formulated their creed and gathered a few disciples after the Buddhists had been banished from the country. The effect of Hinduism upon them is seen in the fact that in the South, where caste prejudices are stronger, the Jains carefully observe caste regulations; but in North India, where the regulations of caste are not so

stringently observed, they generally regard themselves as belonging to the Vaishyas, the third of the great castes.

The main body of the Jains is divided into two great classes, the Swetambaras, or white-robed; and the Digambaras, or air-clad, *i.e.* naked. Between these the most bitter animosity prevails. Probably the Digambaras went about naked, or nearly so; now they simply divest themselves of their upper garment during meals; the Swetambaras, on the other hand, retain their clothes whilst they eat. This, however, does not constitute the only difference between them. The Swetambaras decorate their images with jewels; their opponents consider this to be wrong. The gurus of the Swetambaras eat their food from vessels; those of the Digambaras must take it from the hands of their disciples. The Swetambaras assert that the angas (Scriptures) were the work of the immediate disciples of the Tirthankaras; the Digambaras affirm a much later orgin for them. The Swetambaras assert that women can obtain nirvāna; the Digambaras deny this.

*Sādhus.* The term Sādhu (saint) is commonly applied to any Hindu ascetic, but there is a sect who accept it as their own proper name. Their great hope is final emancipation from living. They have no temples, but declare that the true shrine is the meeting of the faithful. At certain times the members meet together, read the writings of their leaders, sing songs, and partake of a common meal. They speak of God as the Satnāma (the true name), and differ but little from the following sect.

The *Satnāmis.* This sect was originated by a man named Rohidās, a disciple, and developer of the system of Rāmānanda. Rāmānanda taught that any of the

three highest castes could enter the ascetic order; his followers went farther and admitted men of lower castes; and at the present time nearly all the members of the sect are Chamārs, one of the lowest. It is a noticeable fact that whilst, as their name implies, they profess to be worshippers of the one true God, many of them worship the Hindu deities. As a rule, however, the members differ from the rest of the Chamārs in this: they are a quiet, industrious, sober people, who regard it a duty to abstain from meat of all kinds, intoxicating drinks, and tobacco. Their necklaces, having been touched by the guru, are regarded with especial reverence. They hate the orthodox Hindus; Brāhmans most of all.

The *Siva Narāyanas* are the followers of a Rājput named Siva Narāyana, who lived in the eighteenth century. His teaching was pure theism. All classes of Hindus, and Mussulmāns too, are welcomed to the sect. Truth, temperance, and mercy form its main tenets, and its members are enjoined to observe the outward social observance of the community from which they came, though they repudiate the religious rites and faiths.

# CHAPTER VII.

## MODERN DEISTIC SECTS.

AN account of the Hindu sects would be incomplete if those were omitted that have arisen during the present century, and which are receiving accessions every year. The aim has professedly been to go back to the primitive worship of their Āryan forefathers, although it is evident that it is the teaching of the Vedas, modified by that of the Christian Scriptures, that is prevailing amongst them. Augustine declared that if Stephen had not prayed, the church would not have had Paul; if Christian missions had not been established in India, the various deistic sects would not have sprung up in her midst.

1. The Brahma Samāj.

Rāja Rāma Mohun Rai, the founder of the Brahma Samāj, or Theistic Society, was born in the year 1774. His father being attached to the Mohamedan princes at Moorshedabad, he learned Arabic and Persian, and thus gained some knowledge of the Korān and the Persian poets. As a Brāhman he was educated in the mythology of Hinduism; but at the early age of sixteen his mind revolted against the heathen practices of his household, and as a result of his opposition he was persecuted, and left his home. When about twenty years old his father invited him to return: he did so, and, in order to qualify himself for employment, studied English, and was

successful in obtaining a position of influence under the East India Company. In 1814 he settled in Calcutta, where, for speaking freely of the evils of Hindu religious and social customs, he was openly repudiated by his father. On his father's death he grew bolder, and published a number of pamphlets in various languages against prevailing errors. "This raised such a feeling against me," he says in an autobiographical sketch, "that I was at last deserted by every person except two or three Scotch friends, to whom, and to the nation to which they belong, I always feel grateful. The ground which I took in all my controversies was not that of opposition to Brāhmanism, but to a perversion of it; and I endeavoured to show that their idolatry was contrary to the practice of their ancestors and the principles of the ancient books and authorities which they profess to revere and obey." In 1819 he published a tract called "The Precepts of Jesus, the Guide to Peace and Happiness." It is interesting to see how the modern reformer availed himself of the improved methods of communicating truth. Most of the leaders of the sects previously considered by a life of asceticism gained attention, and wandering from city to city orally spread their views; but Rāma Mohun Rai lived in his own house, and by the use of the press spoke to far greater numbers through his pamphlets.

In the year 1828 the Society was founded. A few friends had been in the habit of meeting with their leader since 1815, but as the numbers increased it was agreed to hire a room, where this monotheistic Church was founded under the name of the Brahma Samāj. In 1830 the numbers had further increased, and a suitable house was built. The following extract from the trust deed will show the purpose of this building: it was

"for a place of public meeting of all sorts and descriptions of people as shall behave and conduct themselves in an orderly, sober, religious, and devout manner, for the worship and adoration of the Eternal, Unsearchable, and Immutable Being who is the Author and Preserver of the Universe." His object in founding the Church was declared to be this—"to persuade his countrymen to forsake idolatry and to become monotheists."

Rāma Mohun Rai did not give up caste observances; and though he was largely indebted to the Bible for his religious knowledge and impulse, he did not introduce it in the meetings of the new Church. The Hindu Scriptures were read and expounded. Soon after the opening of the building the Rāja visited Europe, and died in Bristol. Though he never avowed himself a Christian, those most intimate with him speak strongly of his belief in the divine authority of Jesus Christ, in His miracles, and in His resurrection.

The next great step in advance was made by Devendra Nāth Tagore, who was born in 1818. When twenty years of age this gentleman was brought under deep religious convictions. He spent days in silent meditation, seeking light from heaven. At length "the Friend of the sinner, the Protector of the helpless, destitute, and castaway, vouchsafed in His infinite mercy to appear in my corrupt heart to heal and chasten me." The result of this was that after a long struggle "the world lost its attractions, and God became my only comfort and delight." Unlike Rāja Rāma Mohun Rai, he does not appear to have gone farther than the Hindu Scriptures for light. In 1839 he formed a society called the Tattvabodini Sabha, a society for the knowledge of truth, which in 1843 united with the Brahma Samāj, and soon afterwards developments appear.

Up to this time the profession of Brahmist doctrine did not involve the giving up idolatrous worship. Many who in the meetings of the Samāj and elsewhere were eloquent in denouncing it, themselves joined in it. To prevent this a covenant was drawn up, which the members were expected to sign, containing a promise to abstain from idolatry, and to cultivate the habit of prayer. About twenty signed this at first, and brought upon themselves considerable persecution. Still the doctrine spread, and in 1847 the number of "covenanted" Brahmas was 767, whilst others professed to hold the same views, though they did not sign the covenant.

Very soon there was another forward movement. So far the members of the Samāj had regarded the Vedas as divinely inspired, and the supreme authority in religious matters. But as doubts had arisen on this subject Pundits were sent to Benares to study these books. On their return the matter was carefully considered, and it was decided that the teaching of the Vedas was not in accordance with their religious views, and though regarded as valuable guides, their infallibility was denied. Soon after this decision had been formed, the society was re-organized, and a fuller covenant drawn up, the substance of which was as follows: "That there is but one God; that He is the Creator of all things; that love to Him, and the doing of what He loves, is worship; and that such worship alone ensures all present and future bliss."

This theistic movement was not confined to Bengal. In North India a sect called the Ārya Samāj was founded by Pundit Dayānanda Sarasvati. He, however, continued to repose an implicit faith in the divine authority of the Vedas; at the same time he "opposed

idol worship, repudiated caste, advocated female education, and the re-marriage of widows, and secured hundreds of followers, and a larger number of sympathisers." *

The next important event in the history of this movement was the accession to the ranks of the Brahma Samāj of Babu Keshub Chandra Sen. In 1858, when he was twenty years of age, Keshub Babu joined, and very soon became the leader of the community. In 1862 he was chosen minister, and shortly afterwards, because he took his wife to dine with his friend, Devendra Nāth Tagore, who was an excommunicated Brāhman, mainly because he had the marriage of his daughter celebrated without the usual idolatrous ceremonies, he was cut off from intercourse with his family for six months.

For a time all went well, but it soon became evident that the new minister was progressing too rapidly for many of the older members. He advocated the intermarriage of people of differing castes. When such a marriage took place a great outcry was raised, and the more progressive members left. The conservative remnant held that the Samāj should concern itself only with religious reforms, and respect the social customs of Hinduism. Before the separation took place the progressive party put their views into the following shape:—

1. That the external signs of caste distinctions, such as the Brāhmanical thread, should be no longer used.

2. That none but Brahmas of sufficient ability and good moral character, who lived consistently with their profession, should be allowed to conduct the services of the Samāj.

* "Keshub Chundra Sen," by Rev. T. E. Slater, p. 29.

3. That nothing should be said in the Samāj expressive of hatred or contempt for other religions.

These simple regulations not being accepted, the progressive party left the Samāj, and established what was called the Brahma Samāj of India; the Society they left afterwards took the name of the Ādi, or original, Samāj. Since this separation the Ādi Samāj has gone back towards Hinduism. The covenant of the Ādi Samāj is as follows:—

1. God alone existed in the beginning, and He created this universe.

2. He is intelligent, infinite, benevolent, eternal, governor of the universe, all-knowing, omnipresent, refuge of all, devoid of limbs, immutable, alone, without a second, all-powerful, self-existent, and beyond comparison.

3. By worshipping Him, and Him alone, we can attain the highest good in this life and in the next.

4. To love Him and to do the works He loves constitute His worship.

By declaring my belief in the above-mentioned four fundamental principles of Brāhmanism, I accept it as my faith.

2. The Brahma Samāj of India.

The conspicuous feature of this society is the reverence shown to Jesus Christ, and the unique position assigned to Him by the leader. In his first public lecture he claimed Jesus as belonging to India and the East rather than to Europe, and it was largely owing to his teaching that the educated Hindus came to regard Jesus with very different feelings from those which had previously been common to that class. At the public services of the Samāj, selections from the Bible were read along with parts of the Vedas, Korān, and other sacred

writings. It professes to draw light from all quarters, though it gives exclusive reverence to none. Whilst admitting the inspiration of all great writers, it teaches that there is a present inspiration for those who will receive it. The individual conscience thus divinely illumined is regarded as the final test of truth, from whatever source it may come.

In the history of the Samāj under Keshub's leadership there are two main features, viz. the effort to adapt the older forms of Hindu faith and practice, and the attempt to introduce, in a Hindu dress, some of the distinctive rites of Christianity. Amongst the Hindu forms of worship are *yoga*, or meditation. In Hinduism this was carried to great extremes; in the public services of the Brahmas it finds a prominent place. Then bhakti, the loving trust of the Vaishnavas in Krishna, is earnestly commended, and Chaitanya, the apostle of this doctrine, is held in high esteem. It appeals to the emotional as well as the intellectual side of human nature. Annual festivals called Brahmotsavas were also instituted. For days together religious meetings are arranged, by which means the faith of the members is strengthened and their zeal fired. Added to this are processions with music and singing, and later there was a tendency in favour of the practice of asceticism. This is in harmony with the genius of Hinduism, as nearly all the other sects have their ascetics, who are regarded as the perfected members of the community.

But Brāhmanism, whilst holding out one hand to Hinduism, holds out another to Christianity. Keshub frequently expressed his love to Jesus Christ and his loyalty to His commands; and the spirit of Jesus is seen in his teaching. He began by claiming Him as an Asiatic, and offered India to Him as a people. He

next attempted to show in an address on "The Future Church," that whilst the dogmatic teaching of Christians is not acceptable to India, the true Church will embrace Christians and Hindus. A few years later he proclaimed the fact that a new "dispensation" has been inaugurated by God through him and his apostles. As God appointed the Jewish, then the Christian, now He has appointed this all-comprehensive Church, which the whole world is invited to enter. Long before this, efforts of a missionary character had been made by the leader and his followers. Addresses were given in various parts of India commending their doctrine, and branch Samājes formed in many places; but with the inauguration of the "New Dispensation" the offer went beyond India, and the blessings of this newly given light were offered to all men. It is interesting to note, too, that the distinctive rites of the Christian Church were adopted by Keshub. Baptism was administered in a pond in the grounds of his house; the Lord's Supper was observed, rice and water being used instead of bread and wine; and later on a religious dance was introduced. The following is the proclamation of the New Dispensation to the world:—

"THE NEW DISPENSATION.
*Extraordinary.*
NEW YEAR'S DAY.
*1st January*, 1883.

"Keshub Chunder Sen, a servant of God, called to be an apostle of the Church of the New Dispensation which is in the holy city of Calcutta, the metropolis of Āryavarta.

"To all the great nations in the world, and to the chief religious sects in the East and the West. To the

followers of Moses, of Jesus, of Buddha, of Confucius, of Zoroaster, of Mahomet, of Nanac, and to the various branches of the Hindu Church. To the saints and the sages, the bishops and the elders, the ministers and the missionaries of all these religious bodies:

"Grace be unto you and peace everlasting.

"Whereas sectarian discord and strife, schisms and enmities, prevail in our Father's family, causing much bitterness and unhappiness, impurity and unrighteousness, and even war, carnage, and bloodshed. Whereas this setting of brother against brother and sister against sister, in the name of religion, has proved a fruitful source of evils, and is itself a sin against God and man. It has pleased the Holy God to send unto the world a message of peace and love, of harmony and reconciliation. This New Dispensation hath He, in boundless mercy, vouchsafed to us in the East, and we have been commanded to bear witness unto it among the nations of the earth.

"Thus said the Lord: Sectarianism is an abomination unto Me, and unbrotherliness I will not tolerate. I desire love and unity, and My children shall be of one heart, even as I am one. At sundry times have I spoken through My prophets, and though many and various My dispensations, there is unity in them. But the followers of these, My prophets, have quarrelled and fought, and they hate and exclude each other. The unity of Heaven's messages have they denied, and the science that binds and harmonizes them their eyes see not and their hearts ignore.

"Hear, ye men, there is one music, but many instruments; one body, but many limbs; one spirit, but diverse gifts; one blood, yet many nations; one church, yet many churches. Blessed are the peace-makers who

reconcile differences and establish peace, goodwill, and brotherhood in the name of the Father. These words hath the Lord our God spoken unto us, and His new gospel that He hath revealed unto us, is a gospel of exceeding joy. The Church Universal hath He already planted in this land, and therein are all prophets and all scriptures harmonized in beautiful synthesis. And these blessed tidings the Loving Father hath charged me and my brother apostles to declare unto all the nations of the world, that being of one blood they may also be of one faith and rejoice in one Lord. Thus shall all discord be over, saith the Lord, and peace shall reign on earth. Humbly, therefore, I exhort you, brethren, to accept this new message of universal love. Hate not, but love ye one another, and be ye one in spirit and in truth, even as the Father is one. All errors and impurities ye shall eschew, in whatever church or nation they may be found, but ye shall hate no Scripture, no prophet, no church. Renounce all manner of superstition and error, infidelity and scepticism, vice and sensuality, and be ye pure and perfect. Every saint, every prophet, and every martyr ye shall honour and love as a man of God. Gather ye the wisdom of the East and the West, and accept and assimilate the examples of the saints of all ages. So that the most fervent devotion, the deepest communion, the most self-denying asceticism, the warmest philanthropy, the strictest justice and veracity, and the highest purity of the best men in the world may be yours. Above all love one another, and merge all difference in universal brotherhood. Beloved brethren, accept our love and give us yours, and let the East and the West with one heart celebrate the jubilee of the New Dispensation. Let Asia, Europe, Africa, and America,

with diverse instruments, praise the New Dispensation, and sing the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of man."

The later years of Keshub's life were given to the development of the religious rather than the social improvement of his followers; for, owing to a departure in practice from his previous teaching, there was a split in the community, and the more progressive members formed another Samāj called the Sādhāran Samāj. The ground of offence was the marriage of Keshub's daughter to the Rāja of Cooch Behar below the age at which he had taught that marriages should be celebrated, and the idolatrous practices permitted at the marriage ceremony.

Keshub died in January, 1884. He was a noble man, greatly beloved by all classes. After his death his family and the Apostolic Durbar, as the council of the New Dispensation is called, refused to allow the platform from which he had taught to be used, it being declared that he, though absent in body, was still their leader. In a less enlightened age it is probable that this would have led to his being regarded as an incarnation of one of the gods. As the Durbar declares that their conscience authorizes them to take this position, it is difficult to set it aside. In the matter of Keshub's daughter's marriage, it was a supposed inspiration that led him to go against his own teaching.

The covenant of this New Dispensation is as follows:—

"One God, one Scripture, one Church.
Eternal progress of the soul.
Communion of prophets and saints.
Fatherhood and motherhood of God.

Brotherhood of man and sisterhood of woman.
Harmony of knowledge and holiness, love and work.
Yoga and asceticism in their highest development.
Loyalty to Sovereign." *

3. The Sādhāran (Universal) Samāj.

This, the most active of the three, originated in 1878. The occasion of the secession, as noticed above, was the marriage of Keshub's daughter at an earlier age than he had taught was right; the cause lay a little deeper. It was the result of a growing dissatisfaction with the autocratic rule of the leader and his claim to an infallible inspiration. The greater number of the Calcutta members of the Brahmā Samāj forsook their old leader, and their action was approved by many of the country branches.

The covenant of this sect is as follows:—

1. There is only one God, who is the Creator, Preserver, and Saviour of the world. He is a Spirit, infinite in wisdom, love, justice, and holiness; omnipotent, eternal, and blissful.

2. The human soul is immortal, and capable of infinite progress, and is responsible to God for its doings.

3. God must be worshipped in spirit and in truth. Divine worship is necessary for attaining true felicity and salvation.

4. Love to God, and carrying out His will in all the concerns of life, constitute true worship.

5. Prayer, and dependence on God, and a constant realization of His presence, are the means of attaining spiritual strength.

6. No created object is to be worshipped as God, nor any person or book to be considered as infallible and the sole means of salvation.

* "Keshub Chunder Sen," p. 107.

7. The Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man.

8. God rewards virtue and punishes sin. His punishments are remedial, and not eternal.

9. Cessation from sin, accompanied by sincere repentance, is the only atonement for it; and union with God in wisdom, goodness, and holiness, is true salvation.

To prevent the undue influence of one man in this Samāj, a form of government has been adopted. The officers, four in number, are elected annually; they act in conjunction with a general committee of forty members, also elected annually, and a certain number of representatives of branch Samājes in the country towns; and this committee in its turn appoints an executive of twelve persons for the year.

This sect has built for itself a meeting-house, and is most active in making its doctrines known. There are more "covenanted" Brahmas in connection with it than with the others, and its organs in the press are active on the side of social progress. It has its prayer-meetings, Philanthropic Society, a first-class college, and a night school for working men. It is part of the constitution of the society that "only those who have discarded idolatry and caste in their private lives as well as in public can be office-bearers, ministers, missionaries, or members of the Executive Committee of the Samāj." There has been some rivalry between these two sects; but they are continuing their work, each along its own lines, and many educated young men are more or less intimately connected with them. They appear to meet the religious needs of many who cannot actively join in the idolatrous worship of the Hindu community.

# DEATH, SHRĀDHA, AND THE FUTURE LIFE.

## CHAPTER I.

### DEATH AND ITS ATTENDANT CEREMONIES.

IN the treatment of people on the approach of death the cruelty of the Hindu religion is more clearly seen than in anything else. Nothing could be farther from the wishes of Hindu sons, husbands, and fathers than to behave cruelly to those whom in health they had tenderly loved and fondly cherished. And yet their affection for the sick and dying prompts them to use means to ensure their happiness in heaven that seem cruel in the extreme. Accustomed to see everything done to alleviate the sufferings of our friends in their last moments, it seems almost incredible that any civilized people could be such slaves to superstition as to adopt measures which cannot fail to increase those sufferings.

In the teaching of Hinduism on this subject we have another instance of the way in which the duty that is under consideration at the moment is made all-important. As each deity in turn is regarded and addressed as the chief of all, so each religious rite is said to be necessary to salvation. One wonders that the people do not ask in despair, "Who, then, can be saved?" and determine that they will let the future take care of itself. According to the Hindu Scriptures, whatever a man's life may have been, if he do not die near some holy stream, if his body is not burned on its banks, or at any rate near

water regarded as a representative of it, and if some portion of his ashes be not thrown into it, his spirit must wander in misery, unable to obtain the bliss for which he has done and suffered so much. Hence the friends of those about to die act towards them in a way that seems most unkind. When it is believed that incalculable good will come to a person dying near a holy river, and that disgrace will attach to their friends if they do not secure this object, it is easily seen how some kind-hearted people assist in these cruelties.

As the statements about to be made may seem almost incredible, I may say that most of them are from the writings of Hindus. In an article on the subject of Ghât murders,* as they are termed, a writer reviewed several prize essays; from this article the greater part of the facts are taken.

In speaking of the strange contradictions we see in Hindu life, where those who are careful not to destroy the life of even an insect, and who regard the killing of a cow as a most heinous offence, yet assist in the burning alive of a mother, and of the inference that they are both humane and inhuman at the same time, the writer says, "Inhumanity had little or nothing to do with the Sati rite, humanity has as little to do with the vegetable diet of the Hindu. It was not from any natural or acquired bloodthirstiness that the Hindus slew their widows; it is not from any natural or acquired blood-abhorrence that they refrain from slaying their cows. . . . The truth is that the Hindu religion overbears nature, and feeling, and principle altogether. . . . It takes no account of the feelings and affections of the soul. Its demands are fully satisfied when a certain round of external observance is complied with. The

* *Calcutta Review*, vol. x. p. 404.

good or bad state of the heart can add nothing to, and take nothing from, the imagined merits of these bodily exercises. From this fact we derive the inference that from the actions required by the system, and habitually performed by its votaries, we are not necessarily to infer so depraved a state of the heart as would be implied in the performance of the actions by those whose deeds were the spontaneous effusions of their hearts." And he goes on to say that though the practice of Sati and other cruel rites cannot fail to have an injurious effect upon the soul, yet it would not be just to infer that "none but a very depraved man would burn his widowed mother, . . . though we should certainly be right were we to assert that the act of burning her would leave the man worse than it found him."

When this custom of exposing the dying on the banks of the rivers came into practice it is impossible to say; but from the fact that the older religious books are silent respecting it, whilst the more modern abound with allusions to it, it is natural to infer that it is of comparatively modern origin. One of the essay writers tries to show that it commenced only about three hundred years ago; but it probably originated earlier than that.

The primary reason for the practice is the belief that Gangā is a divine being. Of her descent from heaven to restore to life the sons of Sāgar we have already spoken, in giving an account of the great bathing festival at Saugor Island.* As the people, believing in the efficacy of this stream to wash away the sins of the living, bathe in her waters, it is but a step farther to believe that at the last moments of a man's life it must be beneficial to be near her, or some water as her

* See chapter on Pilgrimages.

representative. Hence, whilst the older writings tell the story of her descent, and descant upon the benefits of bathing in her, the more modern ones develope this teaching, and dwell not only upon the benefits of dying on her banks, but go so far as to affirm that it is absolutely necessary to secure a speedy entrance into heaven. In the older accounts of Gangā's advent it is said that as soon as her stream reached their ashes the sons of Sāgar ascended to heaven in golden chariots. This is the germ which has been so largely expanded in the more modern writings. As examples of the popular teaching of the benefits Gangā can confer on mortals the following extracts are given.

"Oh, Mother Ganges! I now bow down at thy feet, have mercy on thy servant. Oh, who can describe thy virtues, since they are past the comprehension of the powers of man? The supreme divinity Brahmā can alone describe some of thy qualities. Were the greatest of sinners, the perpetrator of endless sins, to pronounce the word Gangā, he, being delivered from all his sins, shall be translated to the blissful abode of the celestials. Thou alone art properly called the 'Source of Happiness,' and the 'Saviour of Men.' Infinite sources of salvation are at thy command. In whatever state a man may die, he is saved, as is proved in the case of the sons of Sāgar, who had been reduced to ashes by the curse of a sage. It is only children who say that it is necessary to be in a state of consciousness. He who performs ablutions on thy banks not only saves himself, but also his ancestors, the ancestors of his mother, and the ancestors of his wife. Thou art material, thou art immaterial! Thou art simple, thou art compound! Thou art the eternal source of all!"

In another work, written especially to teach the virtues

of Gangā, called the Gangā Bākyabali, is the following: "He who thinks upon Gangā, though he be 800 miles distant from the river at the time, is delivered from all sin, and is entitled to heaven. At the hour of death, if a person think upon Gangā, he will obtain a place in the heaven of Siva. If a person, according to the regulations of the Sāstras, be going to bathe in Gangā, and die on the road, he shall obtain the same benefits as though he had actually bathed. If a person who has been guilty of killing cows, Brāhmans, his guru, or of drinking spirits, touch the waters of Gangā, desiring in his mind the remission of these sins, they will be forgiven." The Skanda Purāna says, "that by dying in the Ganges, a person will obtain absorption into Brahma." The same work contains a promise from Siva, that "whoever dies in Gangā shall obtain a place in his heaven." The Bhavishya Purāna affirms that "if a worm, an insect or a grasshopper, or any tree growing by the side of Gangā, die in the river, it will obtain absorption into Brahma." The Brahmā Purāna says, "that whether a person renounce life in Gangā, praying for any particular benefit, or die by accident, or whether he possesses his senses or not, he will be happy. If he purposely renounce life, he will enjoy absorption or the highest happiness; if he die by accident, he will still obtain heaven." The Kurma Purāna says, "Those that consciously die on the banks of the Ganges shall be absorbed into the essence of Brahma; whilst those who die there unconsciously shall go to the heaven of Brahmā." The Agni Purāna declares that "those who die when half their body is immersed in Gangā water, shall be happy thousands of thousands of ages and resemble Brahmā."

With passages such as these, in what they believe to

be divinely inspired Scriptures, who can wonder that, in their desire to obtain for their dying friends the unspeakable blessedness promised, the Hindus should act in a manner that at first sight seems to indicate the absence of all human feeling? Where these statements are believed it is the greatest charity to a sick friend to place him in such favourable circumstances, even though they may increase his pain and materially shorten his present earthly life. In addition to these authoritative texts are stories commonly told, and as implicitly believed, all tending in the same direction. On the banks of the Bhāgirathi,* there grew a stately banyan tree, in whose ample foliage a paddy-bird had made her nest. On a certain day the tree was blown down by a storm. The bird was destroyed, and its bones buried in the deep channel of the Ganges. In its next transmigration the bird was taken to heaven, because its bones had been deposited in the river, and became one of Indra's queens. But her residence there extended only to the time taken in the decomposition of her bones. As the day approached for her return to earth, Indra told her she could be born in any form she wished. She chose to come as an elephant, because its bones being of an immense size, they would occupy a long time in decomposing.

Such is the teaching of the books; what is the common practice? "Whenever the disease of a patient arrives at such a stage as, according to the judgment of the doctors, renders any further attempt for his recovery fruitless, the first thing that is suggested to his friends and relatives, as a matter of duty, is to carry him to the banks of the river, or, to use the homely phrase of the natives, 'to give him to Gangā.' Here we must observe

* Another name of Gangā.

that in the minds of the orthodox Hindus the carrying of their sick to the river is . . . reckoned as a higher and a stronger duty than the seeking of means for their recovery. Their reasoning on this head is very simple. 'Life and death,' say they, 'are in the hands of the gods; but the carrying of the sick to the river lies entirely in our hands; therefore we must first do our duty, let the doom of the sick be as the gods determine.' Such being the state of the minds of the natives, the scene which next follows is highly affecting. No sooner do the practitioners pronounce the case of a Hindu patient to be hopeless, than the members of his family, assisted by their neighbours, begin with all haste and precaution to make preparations for taking him to the river. These preparations consist in bringing in that wretched imitation of a couch, called a khat, for the dead, and, if it be night, a number of torches, in sending for the old and experienced persons, and in giving a general notice throughout the neighbourhood. In the mean time the friends of the sick watch with great diligence and anxiety over the progress of the disease; but, alas! not because they care so much for his death as for his dying at home. When the necessary preparations are made, a piece of cloth, the worst and dirtiest on the patient's bed, is spread over the couch on which he is to be carried, and then he himself is placed upon it. Now is presented the most moving part of the scene. All the relatives of the sick man, the females in particular, who, of course, are not allowed to go out of doors, gather round his couch, beat their breasts and foreheads; some go to clasp their dying friend with their arms; others, in the height of grief, fall flat on the ground; whilst all raise a noise, the shrillest that can be imagined. From the midst of this most distressing scene the sick

man is brought out, not without much exertion, and carried to the river, the bearers and attendants throughout the way repeating loudly the names of the gods and goddesses arranged for the purpose in a certain order.

"When they arrive at the banks of the river, they step down the ghât, and lay their burden close to the waters of the Ganges; then they ask him to cast a look at her white expanse, and cause him to say that he has come to see the Mother Ganges. He is then brought upon the ghât, where either a low, damp, and miserable hut, or, as in some places, a decent building, but crowded with a multitude of dying people, and filled with all kinds of dirt and nuisance, receives him. Here he is taken from the khat and laid on a miserable bed on the floor, surrounded by beings like himself, whose shrieks and groanings disturb his repose at every moment. A few minutes before his death he is again brought down to the brink of the river, where, half immersed in water, he gives up the ghost."

So far as this account describes the circumstances of the sick when they reach the river-side, I can bear testimony to its absolute truthfulness. I have frequently seen men, women, and children, lying under trees, exposed to the heat of the sun by day, and to the cold at night, waiting for death. In some places, as stated above, are houses built for the reception of the dying; but they are open on all sides, and instead of the quiet and comfort of home, these dying people have, in addition to their own pains and anxieties, the sight of others similarly situated. At one place I saw sick people who had lain on the river bank for three weeks, unwilling to return home, as their friends were unwilling to take them. Sometimes sick persons, weary of pain and

weakness, thinking that death is near, and hopeful that heavenly rewards will follow their passing away in a sacred place, accept gladly the suggestion that they shall leave their home; but others, when they see the preparations for their removal, vainly entreat to be allowed to remain in peace and quietness. And when they hear that their friends consider the time for their removal has come, though hitherto they have cherished the hope of recovery, they give themselves up to death.

Once I saw what seemed nothing less than murder, though it was, and still is, a common occurrence. Returning to my boat late at night, I found that a poor old woman was being hurried into eternity by her friends. She had been brought to the river side, and was up to her waist in the cold water, whilst other women were filling her mouth with mud. She died as I stood there, and it was hard to believe that these people felt that they were acting kindly towards this poor woman. Who knows whether in her case, as in thousands of others, proper care might not have prolonged her days?

This treatment of the sick is not only cruel, but destructive to human life. In one of the essays referred to, the writer, having spoken of the evil effect on the spirits of the sick, when, by the actions of their friends in removing them, they are told that all hope of their recovery is given up; of the painful effects of the shaking as they are being carried; of the injury they receive from exposure to the sun, rain, or cold on their way to the ghât, and of the evil effect of inhaling the vitiated air from the proximity of these ghâts to the places where the dead bodies are burned, says, "causes which singly would make any one sick, and combined would kill him, what is there to prevent the conclusion being drawn that

several, at least, out of many cases of the sick would not prove fatal, if they were not subjected to the above insalutary influences? Many a sick man, we may safely say, dies solely on account of being exposed to the insalubrious influence of the above destructive agents—a fate which he would not meet, were he suffered to lie at home. May we not, then, reckon the people who forcibly drag the sick to the river perpetrators of a crime which amounts to nothing less than a species of murder?"

Here is an account of an actual case: "Some years ago we had formed an acquaintance with a native youth. Among a large class of boys, Romonāth was by far the fairest and handsomest. On further acquaintance we found him intelligent and amiable. Our acquaintance with him continued for several years. One morning we were told that Romonāth was sick—so sick that he had been taken to the ghât. At the time the tidings were brought us we were conversing with several friends, amongst whom was a medical gentleman. We at once resolved to set off to see our young friend. The day was one of extreme sultriness; and after driving under the conduct of a native guide through a perfect network of narrow and filthy lanes, we reached the place, in a state of greater exhaustion from heat than we remember ever to have felt on any other occasion during a long residence in India. We found the poor patient in a high fever, laid on the ground in a little hut of mats erected for the occasion. He was under the care of his father, who seemed almost stupefied at the prospect of losing his darling, beautiful boy. Our medical friend declared that the symptoms were scarcely more severe than might have been expected to be produced in a healthy patient by the treatment to which he was being subjected.

Although this treatment had greatly aggravated the disease, which must originally have been very slight, else the patient must have died long before, his opinion was that if it were possible to have the sufferer removed to a place where he should have sufficient shelter, and to have him under proper medical treatment, there was very little doubt of a favourable issue.

"We willingly offered to convey him to our own house, and to give him an apartment which he could occupy without prejudice to his caste, and our medical friend as willingly offered to attend him there; but to this the father would not consent. The next best proposal was to have him removed to his own house, where also medical attendance was freely proffered; but all would not do. A consultation with some Brāhmans who were in attendance completely turned the scale in the father's judgment. On the one side were the yearnings of a father's love; on the other was the dread of the disgrace that would be incurred were the son, after all, to die at a distance from the holy stream. After spending a long time in ineffectual attempts to gain over the father, seconded, as we thought, by the supplicating looks of the suffering son, who, although he was unable, to give more than monosyllabic answers to the questions whether he would not like to go to our house or his own, seemed evidently, by the earnest gaze of his fine eyes, to be deeply anxious for the success of our suit, we had no resource but to withdraw, having only gained thus much, that the father consented, if we sent European medicine, that he would permit his son to take it. This we soon procured, and returned with it as speedily as possible; but on our return we found the hut demolished, and on inquiring what had become of the sufferer, there was pointed out to us a funeral pile,

on which the lately beautiful body of our young friend was already reduced to little more than a small heap of ashes. This is a single case, and one marked by no features of singular atrocity ; but it is a fair and unexceptionable example of the way in which this truly murderous custom daily acts in killing scores of our fellow-creatures who might otherwise survive, and in hastening the deaths of hundreds, and in rendering miserable the last hours of thousands."

That it is a common practice for Hindus to get rid of parents or other persons from whose death they may receive some pecuniary advantage, I do not for a moment believe ; but this custom of hurrying the sick from home, and, immediately after death, burning the body, renders the administration of poison a very easy matter. The legitimate practices on these occasions are favourable to those who wish to become possessed of the property or position of their victims. That advantage is taken of the practice under consideration the following account will show. "A rich native, who had been attended in various illnesses by a European practitioner of eminence in Calcutta, was taken to the ghât to die. Intimation of this fact having been in some way made to the doctor, he hastened to the spot, and found him only slightly indisposed. Observing that he was attended by one only of the sections into which he knew the family was divided, he immediately suspected there was foul play in the case. On asking if the patient had made a will, and being answered in the affirmative, he requested permission to read the document. This being granted, he found, as he had expected, that the testamentary disposition was entirely in favour of that portion of the testator's family who were now in attendance on him. With most praiseworthy imprudence he tore the will

into shreds, and immediately the attendants consented that the sufferer should be removed, it being now their interest that he should recover and make a will, similar to the former one, as it was formerly their interest that he should die." From what has been said it seems evident that the custom "produces death in many cases, and probably hastens it in all, while it opens up a way whereby the unnatural and murderously disposed may execute their foul purposes without the possibility of detection."

In some diseases, such as cholera, there is a stage when the pulse is scarcely perceptible, and the patient has the appearance of death; and cases are on record where, in this condition, the sick have been revived by the heat of the fire that was kindled under them for the purpose of burning their body; and eye-witnesses have declared that the response to this sign of returning life has been a murderous blow from a bamboo, in the hand of one of the attendants. When it is understood that it is accounted disgraceful for a person, taken to the ghât to die, to return home; that it is regarded as a sign that Gangā has rejected him, it is easy to see how this additional aid to death should be given under the superstitious belief that it was an act of kindness to their friend.

In former years people who recovered from sickness, after being taken to the riverside, were not permitted to rejoin their family, but, being "rejected by Gangā," were also disowned by their relatives. A large village near Calcutta is occupied by the descendants of these people, who have intermarried with each other, unmindful of their former caste distinctions, because they were all outcastes. This practice has now ceased; the few who survive this unnatural treatment are permitted to return to their homes.

The following extract from another and more recent Hindu writer * fully corroborates what has previously been said. After giving a description of the ghâts, where the sick are brought to die, he says: "Can imagination conceive a more dismal, ghastly scene? Yet religion has crowned the practice with the weight of national sanction, and thus deadened the finer susceptibilities of our nature. Sad as this picture is, the most staunch advocate of Liberalism can hardly expect to escape such a fate. To a person accustomed to such scenes death and its concomitant agony loses half its terrors. Instances are not wanting to corroborate the truth of this painful fact. Persons entrusted with the care and nursing of a dying man at the burning ghât soon get tired of their charge, and, rather than minister to his comforts, are known to resort to artificial means, whereby death is actually accelerated. They unscrupulously pour the unwholesome, muddy water of the river down his already choked throat, and in some cases suffocate him. 'These are not the ebullient flashes from the glowing caldron of a kindled imagination,' but undeniable facts founded on the realities of life.

"The process of antajali, or immersion, is another name for suffocation. Life is so tenacious in what the Hindus call *old bones*, or aged persons, that I have seen some persons brought back home after having undergone this murderous process nine or ten times in as many days. The patient, perhaps an uncared-for widow cast adrift in the world, retaining the faculty of consciousness unimpaired, is willing to die rather than continue to drag on a loathsome existence, but nature will not readily yield up the vital spark. . . . In the case of an aged man, the return home after *immersion*

* "The Hindus as they are," p. 251.

is infamously scandalous; but in that of an aged widow the disgrace is more poignant than death itself. I have known of an instance in which an old widow was brought back after fifteen *immersions*, but, being overpowered by a sense of shame, she drowned herself in the river, after having lived a disgraceful life for more than a year. No expression is more frequent in the mouth of an aged widow than this: 'Shall I ever die?' Scarcely any effort has been made to suppress, or even to ameliorate, this barbarous practice, simply because religion has consecrated it with its holy sanction."

The influence of this superstition is seen in other ways. I have heard from credible witnesses that they have seen pilgrims on the way to Saugor Island, and in other parts of the Ganges, when they have fallen into the river, or their boat has capsized, being allowed to drown without the slightest effort being made to save them. Hindus near at hand have simply allowed them to die, under the impression that they would be doing an injury to them if they took them from the sacred water. The writer of the article in the *Calcutta Review* gives an account of his own experience. When walking on the deck of a small boat his foot slipped and he fell headlong into the river. His boatmen never attempted to rescue him; but fortunately another boat was near, and he was saved. When his boat reached the shore, his men, who had carried him over the muddy banks down to the boat, refused to touch him. Their excuse was this: "Was it not enough that we carried you yesterday, must we carry you now when Gangā refused to have you?"

The ceremonies connected with the burning of the corpse will now be described.

"The sick man dies after a stay (say) of four days at

the ghât, suffering, perhaps, excruciating pangs and agony. During these days the names of the gods are repeatedly whispered in his ears, and the consolations of religion are offered him with no unsparing hand, in order to mitigate his sufferings, and, if possible, to brighten his last hours. The corpse is removed from its resting-place to the burning ghât, a distance of a few hundred yards, and preparations for a funeral pile are speedily māde. The body is then covered with a piece of new cloth and laid upon the pyre, the upper and lower parts of which are composed of firewood, faggots, and a little sandal-wood, and ghî to neutralize the smell. The Manipora Brāhman, an outcaste, reads the formula, and the son, or nearest of kin, changing his old garments for new white clothes, at one end of which is fastened an iron key to keep off evil spirits, sets fire to the pile. The body is consumed to ashes, but the navel remaining unburnt is taken out and thrown into the river. Thus ends the ceremony of cremation. The son, after pouring a few jars of holy water on the pile, bathes in the stream and returns home with his friends."* On reaching home they all touch fire, and enter the house with the cry, "Hāri Bol!" on their lips. This tells the inmates that the last rites of their sick relative have been performed, and is the signal for renewed expressions of grief. Those who have once heard the cry of Hindu women at the loss of husband or child will not easily forget it.

When a Hindu dies at a distance from the river, if his friends can arrange to do so, the corpse is carried to its banks, and there burned. I have seen bodies carefully wrapped in sacking that have been carried over thirty miles for this purpose. Where the distance is too great, or the expense too heavy, after the body has been

* "The Hindus as they are," p. 259.

burned nearer home, some of the ashes will be thrown into the river.

Until recent years, the scenes at a burning ghât caused by the Brāhmans who repeat the mantras before the body is burned, were disgraceful. These men, despised by their fellow-Brāhmans, have lost their self-respect, and act like harpies in extracting money from the friends of the deceased. The mantras must necessarily be read, and the monopoly of this work being in their hands, disgraceful scenes of chaffering took place before they would proceed. Now the legal price has been fixed, and this unseemly squabbling is at an end.

"From the time of his father's death to the conclusion of the funeral ceremony the son is religiously forbidden to shave, wear shoes, shirts, or any garment other than a long piece of white cloth; and his food is confined to a single meal, consisting of rice, dhal, milk, ghî, and sugar, which must be cooked either by his wife or mother, but it is preferable if he can cook for himself; at night he takes a little milk, sugar, and fruit. This regimen continues ten days if the deceased be a Brāhman, and thirty-one if a Sudra. A married daughter, when her father or mother dies, mourns for three days only. On the morning of the fourth day she is enjoined to cut her nails and perform the funeral ceremony for her departed parent."

In a hot and densely populated country like India there is much to be said in favour of cremation, but in the manner in which it is usually performed there is not much to commend it to Europeans. When the friends can afford to purchase a sufficiency of wood to consume the body thoroughly there is much that is repulsive. The body is washed in a public place open to the gaze of bystanders. Only a cotton garment is used to wrap

round the body, and when, as frequently happens, the flames run along this, the limbs are exposed. But the poorer people cannot provide wood sufficient to consume the body, and parts are left for the jackals and vultures to eat. The vicinity of a burning ghât is strewed with human skulls and other bones that have simply passed through the fire. The scene is painful and disgusting to any who have not been brought up in Hinduism, and by familiarity come to regard these things with indifference.

In the account of the treatment of the dying and dead I have given accounts by Hindu gentlemen of what actually takes place, a few sentences will now be added from Colebrooke's account of the religious ceremonies of the Hindus,* more especially of Brāhmans, as taught in the Scriptures; the ceremonies, though varying a little in manner, are identical in spirit and aim.

"A dying man, when no hopes of his surviving remain, should be laid upon a bed of cusa grass, either in the house or out of it if he be a Sudra, but in the open air if he belong to another tribe. When he is at the point of death donations of cattle, land, gold, silver, or other things, according to his ability, should be made by him, or, if he be too weak, by another person in his name. His head should be sprinkled with water drawn from the Ganges, and smeared with clay brought from that river. A sālgrama ought to be placed near the dying man, holy strains from the Veda or from sacred poems should be repeated aloud in his ears, and leaves of holy basil must be scattered over his head." Instructions then follow respecting the washing of the corpse, the spreading of a perfumed cloth over it, the carrying it to the place of burning, and the preparation of the pile.

* "Essays," p. 97 ff.

When all is ready, if it be the body of a priest who has kept a sacred fire perpetually burning in his house, the fire to ignite the pile must be brought from it; but if not, then "it is only necessary to avoid taking fire from another funeral pile, or from the abode of an outcaste, of a man belonging to a tribe of executioners, of a woman who has lately borne a child, or of any person who is unclean."

When all is ready, "a relative of the deceased, taking up a lighted brand, must invoke by name the holy places on the earth, and say, 'May the gods with flaming mouths burn this corpse!' He then walks thrice round the pile, with his right hand towards it, and (if he be a Brāhman) shifts the sacrificial cord to his right shoulder. Then looking towards the south, and dropping his left knee to the ground, he applies the fire to the pile near the head of the corpse, saying, 'Namo! Namah!' whilst the attendant priests recite the following prayer: 'Fire! thou wert lighted by him, may he therefore be reproduced from thee, that he may attain the region of celestial bliss. May this offering be auspicious!'"

The burning must be so arranged that a few bones are left unconsumed for the subsequent ceremony of gathering the ashes. The other friends also throw into the fire a few bits of wood, as an offering to Agni, as they say, "Salutation to thee who dost consume flesh." Instructions are given for the burning of the body of a Hindu by proxy when he may have died far away from home or his body cannot be found. In this case three hundred and sixty leaves of the butea tree, or as many woollen threads, are taken as his representative and burnt in place of the corpse.

When the body is reduced to ashes the friends who have taken part in the ceremony walk round the ashes,

bathe in the river, change their clothes, and going again into the water, after taking up a little in the hollow of their joined hands, and naming the deceased and his family, say, "May this be acceptable to thee!" When this is done, as a consolation to them the following or other texts are recited:—

"Foolish is he who seeks permanence in the human state; unsolid, like the stem of the plantain tree; transient, like the foam of the sea."

"When a body formed of five elements to receive the rewards of deeds done in its own former person reverts to its five original elements, what room is there for regret?"

"The earth is perishable; the ocean, the gods themselves, pass away; how should not that bubble, mortal man, meet destruction?"

"All that is low must finally perish, all that is high must ultimately fall, all compound bodies must end in dissolution, and life is concluded with death."

"Unwillingly do the manes of the deceased taste the tears shed by their kinsmen; then do not wail, but diligently perform the obsequies of the dead."

After a time the friends return home, the nearest relation going first with a new earthen jar of sacred water. At or near the house the first part of the religious ceremony for the deceased takes place. A suitable spot being prepared, a ball of tila seed, boiled rice, honey, etc., is made and offered to the spirit of the departed with these words: "May this first funeral cake, which shall restore thy head, be acceptable to thee!" Again purifying the place and addressing the departed spirit with the formula, "May this apparel be acceptable to thee," a woollen yarn is laid upon the cake. The next offers with the same formula a pot of water and tila seeds. Some food is then laid upon a leaf for the crows.

Before entering the house each friend bites three leaves of nim, sips water, and touches a branch of Sāmi with his right hand as the priest says, "May the Sāmi tree atone for sins!" Each mourner then touches fire whilst the priest says, "May fire grant us happiness!" In the evening of the same day water and milk are suspended in vessels before the doors of the house, and the words, "Such a one, now deceased, bathe here, drink this," are recited.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE SHRĀDHA, OR RELIGIOUS CEREMONIES FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE DEAD.

THE ceremonies now to be described are performed by their relatives for the benefit of the dead.

In the case of old persons, or those who have been ill for a long time, one ceremony called the Vaitarārni rite is performed before their death. This is called after the name of a river which, it is supposed, the dead must cross ere they enter heaven. Before the day arrives for removing the sick man to the river, money is given to a number of Brāhmans in lieu of a cow, rice, etc., that they may guide and assist him in crossing this river. When this is not performed before death, it forms part of the ceremonies of the Shrādha.

Of all ceremonies the Shrādha is the most important, and in some cases equal in expense to a marriage. It takes place on the thirtieth day after the death of the person on whose behalf it is celebrated. Its main features are the feeding of large numbers of Brāhmans and Hindus of other castes, and in the presentation of offerings of food, sweetmeats, etc., to the spirit of the person recently deceased, and his or her ancestors.

Instructions concerning this ceremony are minutely given in the Sāstras. "During ten days funeral cakes, together with libations of water and tila, must be offered

as on the first day, augmenting, however, the number each time, so that ten cakes and as many libations of water and tila be offered on the tenth day; and with this further difference, that the address varies each time." "If the mourning last three days only, ten funeral cakes must, nevertheless, be offered—three on the first and last, and four on the second; if it lasts no more than one day, the ten oblations must be made at once. The difference in the address consists in the mention of the part of the body that is supposed to be restored by the cake. The first is for the head; the second is for the restoration of the ears, eyes, and nose; the third is for the throat, arms, and breast, etc. During this time a pebble wrapped in a part of a sheet that was laid over the deceased is worn by the heir, or nearest of kin, suspended on his neck. To this pebble, as a type of the deceased, the funeral cakes are offered. The same vessel in which the first oblation was made must be used for all the others; if it be broken, or the pebble lost, the rites must be gone through a second time."

The relatives to the sixth degree ought to fast three days and nights, or at least one day; the near relatives must observe a partial fast as long as the days of mourning continue, *i.e.* until the thirtieth day after the death occurred. In some cases the funeral obsequies are hastened; they *may* be performed on the third day after the body has been buried.

The first important duty after a Shrādha, *i.e.* the offering of a cake for the deceased, is the collecting of the bones. With many rites that it would be tedious to describe, a few ashes or part of the corpse are collected and burned on the banks of the river, whilst a bone is cast into the stream itself. Before going to the river, however, there is the feeding of Brāhmans, who

have been invited to honour the family by their presence. When these have eaten, the person performing the ceremony places some cusa grass on the ground, and then strews uncooked rice, tila, and ghî on it as the priest repeats for him this prayer, "May those in my family who have been burnt with fire, or who are alive, who are yet unburnt, be satisfied with this food, presented on the ground, and proceed contented towards the supreme path [of eternal bliss]. May those who have no father, nor mother, nor kinsman, nor food, nor supply of nourishment, be contented with this food offered on the ground, and attain, like it, a happy abode!" After this he again sanctifies the place of sacrifice and offers a cake to his ancestors, asking them each to take a share. And yet again naming the deceased person, he offers food, thread, etc., for clothing; and then, having paid his fee to the priest, he lights a lamp in honour of the dead person, and casts the food into the fire, by which means it is supposed to reach those for whom it was given. On his arrival at the burning place he prays the gods to "convey the deceased to pleasing and eternal abodes, and grant to him long life, health, and perfect ease."

"On the last day of mourning the nearest relation puts on neat apparel, and causes his house and furniture to be cleaned; then, after offering the tenth funeral cake in the manner described, he makes ten libations of water from the palms of his hands, is shaved, his nails are cut, and the clothes worn at the funeral, and other remuneration, are given to the barber. He anoints his head and body with sesamum oil, . . . sips water, touches auspicious things, as stones, nim leaves, a cow, coral, etc., and a bamboo staff, and returns to his home purified.

"The next day a second series of obsequies are commenced, the interesting part of which is the setting free of a bullock which is regarded as sacred. According to the circumstances of the family, one, three, or more bullocks having been branded with a trident, the mark of Siva, are turned adrift—a custom reminding us of the scapegoat. These bulls are deemed sacred, and allowed to go into the fields and eat the grain. In some places, where the people are not quite so superstitious, these are caught and sold. In Calcutta many of these sacred animals are put to the ignoble duty of drawing carts. The common idea is that as the bull was especially dear to Siva, the person on whose behalf it is devoted will be raised by its assistance to Siva's heaven. Presents are given largely at these ceremonies to Brāhmans and others; and, though not absolutely necessary to salvation, are believed by the superstitious to be largely beneficial to those in whose name or on whose behalf they are given.

"The first set of funeral ceremonies is adapted to effect, by means of oblations, the re-embodying of the soul of the deceased, after burning his corpse. The apparent scope of the second set is to raise his shade from this world (where it would else, according to the notions of the Hindus, continue to roam among demons and evil spirits) up to heaven, and there deify him, as it were, among the manes of departed ancestors. For this end a Shrādha should be offered to the deceased on the day after the mourning expires; twelve other Shrādhas singly, in twelve successive months, similar obsequies at the end of the third fortnight, and also on the sixth and twelfth months; and the oblation called sapindana on the first anniversary of his decease. At the sapindana this prayer is offered, 'May the mansion of

those progenitors who have reached a common abode, and who have accordant minds, foster him; may the blessed sacrifice, sacred to the gods, be his, and by their intercession may prosperity be mine for a hundred years in this world.' In most provinces the whole of these ceremonies are completed on the second or third day; after which the others are performed at the proper times, but in honour of the whole set of progenitors, instead of the deceased singly. Afterwards a Shrādha is annually offered to him on the anniversary of his decease."

Not only in connection with funerals, but on joyous occasions, especially at weddings, offerings are made to the deceased. By means of these the dead are supposed to share in the festivities of the living members of their family. With such benefits promised to those whose funeral rites are properly performed, it cannot surprise any to hear of the great anxiety of the Hindus for sons. Who but a faithful son would take all the trouble and incur all the expense that the proper performance of a Shrādha involves?

At the sapindana ceremony the worshipper generally offers eight cakes: *i.e.* three for his paternal, and three for his maternal, ancestors, and two for the Viswadevas, *i.e.* the gods. Grasping with his hand the cusa grass on which they are laid, a share is supposed to be given to his remoter ancestors. On specially sacred days, when Shrādhas are performed, such as Mahālayā, cakes are also offered separately to any deceased relation or friend in whom the offerer is specially interested.

At Shrādhas, Manu and other writers distinctly enjoin the eating of flesh; but the Hindus who object to this practice declare the law to be obsolete; or they make a vow to abstain, which they regard as superior to a

command of the Scriptures. This order is generally disregarded at the present time.

The teaching of the Vishnu Purāna, similar in spirit to the above for Brāhmans, and which is the rule observed by those of other castes, is as follows: When the dead body has been burned, the kinsmen are to bathe with their clothes on; and looking towards the south, make offerings to the deceased as they say, "May this reach thee wherever thou mayest be!" For ten days the mourning is continued, during which the friends are ceremonially unclean; on the first day one cake of cooked rice and spices is made and offered to the deceased; on the second day, two, and so on, each day increasing the number until the tenth day is reached, when Brāhmans are feasted and the impurity of the mourners is ended, a ball of rice being placed near the food that was prepared for the Brāhmans as an offering for the benefit of the deceased. This ceremony, with the exception of feeding the Brāhmans, is repeated monthly for a year on the day of the month on which the person died. At the end of the year the ceremony called sapindana is performed. Here again cakes of food are prepared for the deceased, and an interesting ceremony is performed, by which it is supposed that the spirit of the departed becomes admitted into the great company of ancestors who are duly nourished by the offerings made by the devout who are still living on the earth. On this occasion four vessels of water are provided, one of which represents the person on whose behalf the ceremony is performed. The water is poured from this vessel into the other three, and thus the spirit of the person recently deceased passes into the great crowd of ancestors. The persons qualified to perform these ceremonies are a son, grandson, nephews, or any male

relative; but if these fail, then females, or whoever is the inheritor of the property of the deceased. This qualification to perform the funeral rites gives a title to the property of which he may die possessed. If these rites are neglected, the soul of the departed cannot enter into the company, nor enjoy the blessedness of the Pitris, or ancestors, who are made happy by the offerings of their descendants.

In addition to the ordinary times specified above, it is always allowable for a man to perform a Shrādha, by which the departed will be greatly benefited, and at special seasons it is taught that a single offering of water and sesamum seeds will content the Pitris for 1000 years, yea, in some cases for 10,000 years. And he who duly performs these ceremonies, and then bathes in a sacred stream, expiates his own sins, whilst offerings made at a shrine are peculiarly acceptable to the progenitors. In one passage it is taught that the mere uplifting of the hands by those who are too poor to give grain will prove a benefit to the friends who have passed away. "He who grudges not his wealth, but presents us with cakes, shall be born in a distinguished family. Prosperous and affluent shall that man ever be who in honour of us gives to the Brāhmans—if he is wealthy, jewels, clothes, land, etc., or who with faith and humility entertains them with food, according to his means, at proper seasons. If he cannot afford to give them cooked food, he may give them uncooked; or, in fact, such gifts as he can give, however trifling they may be. Should he be unable to do this, he can at least bow before a Brāhman and give him a few seeds, and pour out a little water upon the ground; or he can gather fodder for a single day and give it to a cow; or even if this be impossible for him, he can go into the forest and

lift up his arms to the sun, and say: 'I have no money, or grain, nor anything fit for an ancestral offering. Bowing, therefore, before my ancestors, I trust they will be satisfied with these arms thrown up in the air in devotion.'" In the following song, said to have been sung by one of the Pitris (patriarchs), Gāya is mentioned as the place where these offerings to the ancestors can be most acceptably made: "Those of our descendants follow a righteous path who shall reverently present us with cakes at Gāya. May he be born in our race who shall give us on the 13th of Bhādra and Māgha, milk, honey, and ghî; or when he marries, or liberates a black bull, or performs any domestic ceremony agreeable to rule, accompanied by donations to the Brāhmans."

The following account of the Shrādha ceremonies as performed in the present day, amongst other than Brāhman castes, is from the pen of a Hindu gentleman.*

About a fortnight after his father's decease, the son goes into a calculation of the amount he ought to spend in the proper performance of the funeral rites. Some of the richer families are said to have expended as much as £20,000 over a funeral, in gifts to Brāhmans, schools, charitable institutions, and the poor; but as it is stated in the Sāstras that Rāmachandra, one of the incarnations of Vishnu, satisfied his ancestors by offering balls of sand for funeral cakes, it is taught that the poor can obtain equal benefit to themselves and ancestors without going to very great expense. A poor man in these days is held to have performed a proper Shrādha by making an offering of rice, tila seed, and a little fruit, and by feeding one Brāhman only—a ceremony that costs him only about four rupees.

When twenty days have passed, the son, accompanied

* "The Hindus as they are," p. 262, ff.

by a Brāhman, walks barefooted to invite his friends and others whom he wishes to be present at the ceremony. On the thirtieth day he and the near relatives who have been ceremonially unclean, owing to the death of the deceased, are now shaved, have their nails cut, and put on clean clothes. On the thirty-first day he bathes in a river, and makes presents to religious mendicants. In a well-conducted Shrādha silver plates and drinking vessels, a bed and clothing, have to be given to the Brāhmans who may honour the families with their presence.

When the guests have assembled, among the Brāhmans will be some who know Sanskrit. A Shrādha is a field-day for these gentlemen, who beguile the weary hours before the feast with argumentation on some knotty point in Sanskrit grammar or Hindu philosophy. "From eight o'clock in the morning to two in the afternoon, the house where a Shrādha is going on is crammed to suffocation. A large awning covers the court-yard, preventing the free access of air; carpets are spread on the ground for the Kāyasthas and other castes, whilst the Brāhmans, by way of precedence, take their seats on the raised Thākurdālan, or place of worship (*i.e.* the platform on which the images made for special religious festivals are placed). The presents, with a salver of silver, are arranged in front of the audience, leaving a little space for the musicians, male and female, which form the necessary accompaniment of a Shrādha, for the purpose of imparting solemnity to the scene. . . . The guests begin to come in at eight o'clock, and are courteously asked to take their appropriate seats—Brāhmans with Brāhmans, Kāyasthas with Kāyasthas, etc.; the servants supplying them with pipes and tobacco, a separate one for each caste. . . . The current topics of

the day form the subject of conversation, while the pipe goes round the assembly with great precision and regularity. The female relatives are brought in covered palanquins by a separate entrance, shut out from the gaze of the males."

About ten o'clock the religious ceremony commences, the priest reading the texts, the son repeating them after him. This occupies about an hour, after which many take their leave, though others remain for a share in the gifts. Often unseemly disputes arise amongst these learned men in the division of the spoil. As some of the Brāhmans, though present at the Shrādha, will not eat in the house of a Sudra, they carry home with them uncooked food.

On the following day the Brāhmans and others are fed again. It is this feast that is supposed to restore the son and other relatives of the dead person to ceremonial purity. Besides those specially invited, it is no uncommon thing for many to come as uninvited guests. The food is composed of what is regarded as sweetmeats, and not rice, the ordinary food of the people. To eat rice with a man is to acknowledge equality of caste; but sweetmeats may be eaten without the ordinary caste restrictions being broken.

On the next day the Kāyasthas and other castes are fed; if possible, the crush is greater than on the Brahman's day. On the following morning the mourning for the deceased is over. The son and nearest relatives having anointed their bodies with oil and turmeric, fix a brisakāt in the ground near the house. The brisakāt is a log of wood about six feet long, on which a figure of an ox is rudely cut. This is a monument to the memory of the deceased. After this they bathe, put on their ordinary dress, and enjoy an ordinary meal.

The following description of a Shrādha performed in Calcutta on September 20, 1882, was one of the most celebrated of modern times.

"The Shrādha ceremony or requiem service of the Dowager Maharāni, widow of the late Maharājah Kāli Krishna Bahādur, and grandmother of the Maharājah Harendra Krishna Bahādur, was held last Sunday morning.

"It was performed in the spacious quadrangle of the Rājbāri (palace), one of the largest in Calcutta. The quadrangle was very tastefully and elaborately decorated, . . . and presented the unusual spectacle of a stately *dānsāgar* (ocean of gift), consisting of sixteen sets of beds, sixteen sets of silver plates and utensils, the plates of each separate set bearing a thousand rupees in silver. There were, besides, with each set, shawls, broadcloth, tusser silk, and silk dhuties and chādars (clothes for men). These articles were all arranged on the east side of the quadrangle; on the south were heaps of brass utensils of every description, symmetrically arranged. There was also a palanquin and a horse.

"All these were dedicated to the service of the family idol, Gopināthji (*i.e.* Krishna), who was brought out and placed on a silver throne over the musnid (or platform), to hallow the service with his sacred presence. Nearly 4000 Adhyapaks, or Professors of Hindu Logic, Philosophy, etc., were invited to the convocation from the principal *tols*, or educational institutions of Bengal, Behar, and Orissa. Besides these, invitations were issued among 1600 of the Maharājah's friends and acquaintances in different parts of Bengal, amongst whom 482 were of the Kāyastha caste. . . . The hour fixed for the service was 8 a.m., and by that time the streets in the vicinity of the Rājbāri presented a scene of animation

and bustle." Then follows a long list of the principal guests invited.

"The company having been seated, Rāja Harendra Krishna, being the oldest of the Mahārāni's grand-children, obtained leave with folded arms, according to Hindu custom, from Maharājah Komul Krishna Bahādur, as the head of the family, to perform the Shrādha ceremony. The Maharājah, before according permission, had himself to obtain the leave of the convocation. During the performance of the ceremony, which lasted about half an hour, the whole assembly remained standing. The Vedic benediction having been pronounced by all the Brāhmans present in a body, the assembly slowly dispersed. In the evening some ten to twelve thousand beggars received charity in the shape of a small coin. On the second day over 2000 Brāhmans were fed; on the third day the Kāyasthas had a feast; whilst some 3500 ladies partook of a banquet on the fourth day. The fifth and last day the tenants and domestics were entertained." The Maharājah of Travancore, in writing to excuse himself from the ceremony, said, "It is a source of satisfaction to you that she died attended with all the observances prescribed in your holy Sāstras." The Maharājah of Doomraon, writing on the same occasion, said, "According to our holy Sāstras, she has been able to breathe her last on the banks of the Hoogly whilst reciting the name of her god."

## CHAPTER III.

### JUDGMENT—REWARDS AND PUNISHMENT.

THE belief in life after death is universal amongst the Hindus; and the opinions held as to its nature do not differ materially in the different sects. It is as follows: When the soul forsakes the body, if, during life, good deeds outnumber the evil, it ascends to heaven to enjoy the reward; if the evil outnumber the good, it sinks into hell to suffer the penalty attached. After a longer or shorter period of reward or punishment, it returns to the earth in a lower or higher position than in the previous life. And this succession of life and death goes on until finally it attains to that condition wherein it is fit to return to the Supreme Spirit whence it came, and of whom, all unconsciously, it was a part. However low in the scale a soul may be, in due time it will rise to the highest, though the process may extend over millions of years. As all have come out from God, to Him they must eventually return. In the case of some there is an uninterrupted rise from the lowest to the highest; in others a more protracted course, owing to sins which have caused them to sink in the scale of being. Every failure must be counteracted by penance and good works in succeeding lives.

In the Vedas the doctrine of the immortality of the soul is not very prominent. The great desire of men in

that age was worldly prosperity; the "powers of the world to come" did not exert any great influence upon the community. Agni and Soma, two of the great gods of that period, are in some hymns spoken of as givers of immortality to mortals; and liberality in gifts was considered as the most certain means of attaining it. Still, in speaking of the departed, they are said to ascend to the Pitris, or *fathers*, as though it was believed that those who had passed out of sight were still living in other worlds.

In these hymns Yama is regarded as the king of the spirit-world, and the rewarder of the faithful, but not as the punisher of the guilty; in fact, "there is very little mention of hell in the Veda." There is a reference to the dogs of Yama which guard the way to his abode, and the worshippers are exhorted to hurry past them with all speed. This Yama is at once the lord of the spirit-world, and the first of mortals who passed through death to glory, and is consequently addressed by men as the guide to immortality. He was the son of the Sun, and Saranyā, the daughter of Tvashtri, the architect of the Vedic gods.

Reference is made to the way in which Agni, the god of fire, whilst consuming the bodies of the dead, did not destroy them, but sent their several parts to heaven, there to form another body, all which parts are said to travel by different routes: "Do thou, Agni, burn up or consume the deceased; do not dissolve his skin or his body. When thou hast matured him, send him to the Pitris. When he shall reach that state of vitality, he shall fulfil the pleasure of the gods. Let his eye go to the sun, his breath to the wind. Go to the sky, and to the earth, according to the nature of thy several parts; or go to the waters, if that be suitable to thee; enter

into the plants with thy members. As for his unborn part, do thou, Agni, kindle it with thy heat, let thy flame and thy lustre kindle it; with those forms of thine which are auspicious, convey it to the world of the righteous. Give up again, Agni, to the Pitris, him who comes to be offered to thee with oblations. Putting on life, let him approach his remains, let him meet with his body." *

In the following quotation from the Brāhmana portion of the Veda, it is taught that the gods, once mortal, have become immortal; and further, that death is the only way of obtaining immortality left to mortals:

> "The gods lived constantly in dread of Death,
> The mighty Ender; so with toilsome rites
> They worshipped and performed religious acts
> Till they became immortal. Then the Ender
> Said to the gods, 'As ye have made yourselves
> Imperishable, so will men endeavour
> To free themselves from me; what portion, then,
> Shall I possess in man?' The gods replied,
> 'Henceforth no being shall become immortal
> In his own body; this his mortal frame
> Shalt thou still seize; this shall remain thine own.
> He who through knowledge or religious works
> Henceforth attains to immortality,
> Shall first present his body, Death, to thee.'" †

As noticed above, Yama, in olden time, was regarded as the rewarder of those who had faithfully discharged their duties in life; now he is also worshipped as Death, ever on the watch for victims, by whom his kingdom may be filled with subjects, and as the cruel judge who condemns the wicked to receive the penalties of their evil doings in the various hells over which he reigns. The following description of Yama on his judgment throne is from the Padma Purāna:—

* "The Vedic Religion," p. 55. † "Indian Wisdom," p. 34.

"At the extremity of the earth southward, floating on the waters, is Sangryamani, the residence of Yama, the judge of the dead, and of his recorder, Chitragupta, and his messengers.

"Those who perform works of merit are led to Yama's palace along the most excellent roads, in some parts of which the heavenly courtesans are seen dancing and singing, and gods and heavenly choristers are heard chanting the praises of other gods; in others, showers of flowers fall from heaven. There are houses containing cooling water and excellent food, pools of water covered with flowers, and trees which afford fragrance and shade. The gods are seen riding on horses or elephants, or carried in palanquins and chariots, some of whom, from the glory emanating from their bodies, illumine the ten quarters of the world. Yama receives the good with much affection, and feasting them with excellent food, thus addresses them: 'Ye are truly meritorious in your deeds; ye are wise; by the power of your merits ascend to an excellent heaven. He who, born in the world, performs meritorious actions is my father, brother, friend.'

"The wicked have 688,000 miles to travel to the palace of Yama to receive judgment. In some places they pass over a pavement of fire; in others, the earth in which their feet sink is burning hot; or they pass over burning sands, sharp stones; also burning hot showers of brass instruments, burning cinders, scalding water, and stones, fall upon them. Burning winds scorch their bodies; now they fall into hidden wells, or pass through narrow passages in which snakes lie concealed. Sometimes they are enveloped in darkness, their road winding through trees with thorny leaves; or they have to walk over broken pots, bones, putrefying flesh, or

sharp spikes; whilst tigers, jackals, giants, etc., beset them. They travel naked, their hair is disordered, their throats and lips are parched, and their bodies are covered with blood and dirt. As they walk some are wailing, some weeping; horror is depicted on every countenance. Some are dragged along by leathern thongs round their necks, waists, or hands; some are dragged by their hair, ears, or feet; others, again, are carried with their head and feet fastened together.

"On arriving at the palace they behold Yama clothed with terror, 240 miles in height, his eyes distended like a lake of water, with rays issuing from his purple body. His voice is loud as thunder, the hairs of his body are as long as palm-trees, a flame proceeds from his mouth. The noise of his breathing is greater than the roaring of the tempest; his teeth are exceedingly long; and his nails like the fan for winnowing corn. In his right hand he holds an iron club, his garment is formed of animals' skins, and he rides on a terrific buffalo. Chitragupta also appears as a terrible monster, and makes a noise like that of a warrior about to rush into battle. Sounds terrible as thunder are heard, as punishments suited to offences committed are ordered on the offenders.

"Addressing the criminals before him, Yama says, 'Did you not know that I am placed above all, to award happiness to the good, and punishment to the wicked? Have you never given your minds to religion? To-day with your own eyes you shall see the punishment of the wicked. From age to age stay in these hills. You have pleased yourselves with sinful practices, endure now the torments due to these sins. What will weeping avail you?' Yama next calls on Chitragupta, the recorder, to examine into the offences of the criminals, who demands the names of the witnesses; let them give

their evidence in our presence. Yama, smiling, though full of rage, commands the Sun, Moon, Wind, Fire, the Heaven, Earth, Waters, Day, Night, Morning, and Evening, and Religion, to appear against the prisoners, who, hearing their evidence, are struck dumb, and remain trembling and stupefied with fear. Yama then, gnashing his teeth, beats the prisoners with his iron club till they roar with anguish ; after which he drives them to different hells." *

There are four kinds of happiness for the faithful after death. The first or lowest form of blessedness is to enter the heaven of one of the gods, most having a heaven of their own, to which they raise their worshippers after death. Here they enjoy the fruit of their meritorious acts for a longer or shorter time, according to the amount of merit they have acquired by their good deeds. The works which gain entrance into one of the heavens have been referred to before ; they are such as honouring and rewarding Brāhmans, pilgrimages, repeating the names of the god, bathing, erecting temples, setting up images for worship, reading sacred books, etc.

The second is actual, though temporary deification. By the performance of certain sacrifices, as the Asvamedh, or horse sacrifice, mortals are said to have attained to the position of Indra, or king over the gods. But this position can be held only for a time. At any moment they may be compelled to yield their throne to others who, by virtue of greater austerity or costliness in sacrifice, have proved themselves more worthy of the honour.

The third stage is where the inhabitants of a heaven live in close intimacy with its god. Many through their good works may enter, but all are not equally honoured

* Ward, vol. iii. p. 376.

there. As there are gradations in the quality and quantity of good works, so the position of those who enter heaven is graded, as is also the duration of their stay there. Those who have performed the greatest number of the best works will remain through a more lengthened period, and obtain nearer access to the god who has received them into his abode.

These three forms of heavenly bliss are terminable, and when the period of enjoyment to which the recipient is entitled has passed, he must be re-born into the world, and endure another trial, starting from a higher level than at the commencement of the previous life. None of the low-caste people have an immediate hope of attaining the highest blessedness. This is exclusively for the Brāhmans. The Sudra's hope is that by reason of his good works he may in due time be born as a Brāhman, and then reach to the summit of bliss attainable by mortals. It is a long vista that opens to the view of these people, as the Sāstras teach that thousands of lives must be spent in rising from the lower to the higher castes, even by those whose ascent is uninterrupted by a single failure.

The highest good is absorption into the Divine Being from whom the spirit came, and of whom it is a part. The common illustration is that of a drop of water falling into the sea. Though it loses its separate existence, it does not cease to be. This comes through knowledge. Good works may raise a man from the lower stages, and raise him into one of the higher castes, to whom the sources of knowledge are available; but knowledge of the soul's identity with God is *the* way of obtaining the highest good. I have seen men who profess to have realized this identity with the Divine, and who, at the end of their present life, expect to lose

themselves in Him. They are dreamy and filthy. Their minds remaining inactive, are almost incapable of thought. They have attained perfection, and are fit for absorption into deity. When death comes, their long course, they expect, will be honourably ended.

The Bhagavata Gita in the following sentence describes the ideal or perfect man as one "who forsaketh every desire that entereth his heart, who is happy in himself, who is without affection, who rejoices neither in good nor evil, who, like the tortoise, can restrain his members from their wonted purpose, to whom pleasure and pain are the same."

The Vishnu Purāna, describing the condition of those in heaven, says: "Not in hell alone do the souls of the deceased undergo pain; there is no cessation even in heaven; for its temporary inhabitant is ever tormented with the prospect of descending again to earth, and again must he die. Whatever is produced that is most acceptable to man becomes a seed whence springs the tree of sorrow." And asks, Where could men, scorched by the sun of this world, look for felicity were it not for the shade afforded by the tree of emancipation? This is the remedy for the ills of life, for it, only, is absolute and final. It teaches that this blessedness is attainable by knowledge and works. Knowledge is of two kinds—that derived from Scripture, and that which results from meditation. Knowledge obtained from Scripture or any extraneous source is compared to the light of a candle, whilst that which comes from reflection is as the light of the sun. In one place men are urged to obtain light from both sources, as they together form a pair of eyes by which a man is able to see the Supreme. The superiority of meditation, or Yoga, is explained in the

following story: "There were two kings, one spiritually minded, intent by knowledge to obtain final liberation; and the other seeking the same end by good works. These two fought, the one possessed of divine knowledge conquering the one given to good works. It happened one day that a cow of the conqueror was killed by a tiger in the forest, but not knowing how to make expiation for the offence he was most miserable; and to add to his difficulty he was told that none but the king whom he had conquered could enlighten him. So to him he went, and though his counsellors urged him, in revenge, to slay his conqueror and regain his kingdom, he refused to do so, on the ground that by this he would regain a mere earthly kingdom, whilst he would lose a heavenly. He decided, therefore, to forgive his foe, and give him the desired information. When the king had made the penance prescribed he was still uneasy in his mind, and found out that this arose from the fact that he had paid no fee to his preceptor. So he again repaired to his former foe and offered a fee. The only one that the king would consent to was this: that he should give him instruction in meditation—how to effect it, and the benefits that would arise from it. The king complies, and assures him that he who devotes himself through several successive lives to meditation on the Divine Being will at length lose himself in the ocean of deity. The two kings obtained absorption; the one who conquered the world handed it over to his son, and went to live a hermit's life in the forest, to carry on the life of meditation he had commenced before; the other, ceasing from trusting in his own good works, lived amidst objects of sense without expecting any advantages to himself. Thus by different roads the two rivals finally were admitted into the ocean of deity."

It may be interesting to know what these various heavens are supposed to be like. The heaven of Indra, called Swarga, is thus described in the Mahābhārata. It is situated on Mount Meru, the centre of the earth, which is supposed to be somewhere to the north of the Himālayahs. The heavens of the other deities are situated near it. It has beautiful houses for its happy inhabitants to occupy, and its splendour is unequalled in the universe. Its gardens are stocked with trees, which afford a grateful shade, yield the most luscious fruits, and are adorned with beautiful and fragrant flowers. Beautiful nymphs charm the inhabitants; whilst choristers and musicians, unrivalled in the universe, discourse the sweetest music. The city, which was built by Visvakarma, is 800 miles in circumference and forty miles high. Its pillars are diamonds; its palaces, thrones, and furniture, pure gold.

The heaven of Vishnu, called Vaikuntha, is similarly described in the same book. It is 80,000 miles in circumference, and has streets of gold, its buildings being formed of jewels, the pillars and ornaments of which are precious stones. The crystal waters of the Ganges fall from the higher heavens on the head of Druva, from thence into the hair of the Seven Rishis, and from there they flow as a river through the city. There are five pools bearing blue, red, and white lotuses. On a seat glorious as the meridian sun, sitting on white lotuses, is Vishnu, and on his right hand Lakshmi, his wife, who shines like a continued blaze of lightning, and from whose body the fragrance of the lotus extends 800 miles.

Kuvera's * heaven is much the same, and is described by the same writer. It is 800 miles long and 560 broad. The wind, perfumed by ten thousand odours, blows in

* The god of wealth.

soft breezes; and the palace, adorned with gold and jewels, displays a glory like the rays of the full moon. Here are canals of pure water filled with fish, water-fowl, lotuses, etc., with ghâts made of gold; and forests in which Kuvera and his courtesans divert themselves. From his treasury the other deities supply themselves with ornaments. Kuvera is there surrounded with gods and goddesses, and hosts of other beings, such as musicians, singers, and dancers. All the pleasures of the other heavens are to be found here.

With the same Oriental extravagance, the several hells are also painted. There are said to be 100,000 hells, each class of offenders being cast into one place, where appropriate punishment is given. This list is taken from the Sri Bhāgavata. Those guilty of fornication and adultery, and those guilty of stealing children, are to be cast into Tāmisra, or the hell of darkness. The proud, who neglect the ceremonies of religion, are to go to Rowrava, where they will be tormented with animals called rurus. The glutton is to be cast into a hell of boiling oil. He who disregards the Vedas and Brāhmans is to be punished in a hell of burning metal for 3,500,000 years. He who injures a man of superior caste is to be torn by swine. The unmerciful are to be tormented by snakes, flies, wasps, lice, etc. The Brāhmans (male and female), the saint, Vaishya, or king, who drink spirits, will be thrown into pans of liquid fire. He who despises a religious mendicant shall be punished by being plunged into mud with his head downwards. He who kills a man and offers him to the gods, and he who eats an animal that has not been sacrificed to the gods, are to be fed on flesh and blood. He who betrays and then destroys a person is to be pierced with spears and arrows. He who is inhospitable to guests must have

his eyes torn out by vultures. The covetous are to be fed with impure food. The person who professes different religions, and is familiar with people of other castes than his own, is to be thrown down from lofty trees. Highway robbers and poisoners are to be bitten by ravenous dogs. False witnesses are to be cast from rocks 800 miles high.

These punishments are inflicted on those who have not offered the atonements provided for these sins, or have not accumulated merit by the performance of good deeds, by which they could be wiped off. Punishment awarded by a magistrate is a sufficient atonement for most offences. Sins atoned for in this life will not bring punishment in the next.

There is an interesting story in the Mahābhārata to show the impossibility of escape from the punishments inflicted by Yama. Rāvana, the demon king of Ceylon, who carried off Sita, had gained such power by his religious acts as to have become a universal conqueror. One day he thought of the suffering souls in hell, and determined to effect their release. As soon as the news of his approach reached him, Yama sent offers of submission to the great conqueror. Seeing the condition of the lost, he said: "I have conquered the three worlds; it will be a glorious thing to set these wretches at liberty." He spoke to them, and hope sprang into their breasts; but when he called them, and with his twenty arms tried to assist them to escape, as fast as he pulled them out, they fell back. At length he saw that even he could not reverse the decree by which they were doomed to suffer.

So far we have considered the rewards and punishments that are experienced in another world. But there are others experienced here, when the soul is born again

into the world. Most definite teaching is given on this subject. Manu declares, without any hesitation, in what form a soul will come who is guilty of certain actions. In order to make his teaching clear, it will be necessary to give his views of man's organism rather fully, and also his classification of morals.

Actions are of three kinds—mental, verbal, and corporeal; and they bear good or evil fruit according as they are good or evil. "From the actions of men proceed their various transmigrations in the highest, mean, and lowest degrees." These three classes of actions are illustrated as follows: *mental actions* are, "planning to appropriate another's wealth, resolving on some forbidden deed, and conceiving notions of atheism or materialism;" *verbal actions* are, "scurrilous language, falsehood, backbiting, and useless tattle;" *corporeal actions* are, "taking goods not given to us, hurting sentient creatures without the sanction of law, and adultery." As the acts are either mental, verbal, or corporeal, so are the punishments for those acts. For corporeal sins a man will assume after death a vegetable or mineral form; for verbal, the form of a bird or a beast; and for mental, the lowest of human conditions.

At death the soul takes to itself another body, like the one that is burned, by means of which it can enjoy the rewards or suffer the penalties of the actions of life.

There are three qualities—viz. goodness, darkness, and passion, one or other of which is the prevailing character of every soul. Goodness is true knowledge; darkness, gross ignorance; and passion, all emotions of desire or aversion. The soul in which goodness prevails is given to the study of the Scriptures, devotion, corporeal purity, command over the organs, meditation on the Divine Spirit. The soul in which darkness prevails

is given to covetousness, indolence, avarice, detraction, atheism, a habit of soliciting favours, and inattention to necessary business. The soul in which passion prevails is given to possess interested motives for acts of religion or morality, perturbation of mind, selfish gratification.

These qualities determine the position the possessors of them must occupy in their following birth. "Souls endued with goodness attain always the state of deities; those with passion the condition of men, and those immersed in darkness the nature of beasts." Each of these classes is again subdivided into three minor classes, and according to the amount or force of the prevailing quality will their position be higher or lower in the grade into which they are born. The gradation of these classes is given as follows :—

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| I. Darkness. | Class | 1. | Vegetable and mineral substances, worms, insects, and reptiles. |
| | ,, | 2. | Elephants, horses, men of mlecha (*i.e.* non-Hindu) nations. |
| | ,, | 3. | Dancers and singers, birds and deceitful men, and savages. |
| II. Passion. | ,, | 1. | Actors. Those addicted to gaming and drinking. |
| | ,, | 2. | Kings, warriors, controversialists. |
| | ,, | 3. | Heavenly musicians and servants of gods. |
| III. Goodness. | ,, | 1. | Hermits, religious mendicants, Brāhmans, and lower gods. |
| | ,, | 2. | Sacrificers, sages, deities of the lower heaven. |
| | ,, | 3. | Brahma, the genius of virtue. |

Then follows a most minute account of sins, and the form the soul will receive in its next birth as a punishment for committing them. After torture for a number of years they re-enter the world, and a new start in their almost infinite career is given them. Thus a Brāhman slayer must, according to the circumstances of his crime, enter the body of a dog, boar, ass, camel, bull, goat,

sheep, stag, bird, or a chandāla (outcaste). A priest who has drunk spirits shall migrate into the form of a worm, or insect, or of some ravenous animal. He who steals the gold of a priest shall pass 1000 times into the bodies of spiders, snakes, or chameleons. If a man steal grain in the husk he shall be born a rat. If a man steal water he shall be born a diving bird; or flesh-meat, a vulture. Women who have done similar evil deeds incur a similar taint, and shall be mated with those male beasts in the form of their females. Failure to discharge religious duties will be punished by migration into sinful bodies and servitude to their foes.

The knowledge of God is the best of all sciences, because it insures immortality, and saves the soul from this almost endless succession of births and deaths, whilst ceremonial duty secures prosperity in this life and bliss in heaven. But even ceremonialism, properly performed, may, in the long run, also save a man from the necessity of reappearing on earth. When a man performs acts of worship with the object of obtaining some special benefit, such as rain, or reward in heaven, he gains only what he seeks—a temporary blessing here, and a temporary residence in heaven; but when he has no special boon to gain, and, moved only by a desire to please the gods, frequently performs ceremonial acts of religion, he too will be rewarded with the highest bliss, and be for ever exempt from a body, the source of all ills.

Such is the teaching on this subject as it was given in a book said to contain the essence of the Vedas, and which has been for over 2000 years the highest religious authority of the Hindus. The imagination of the later writers has exerted itself upon it, and in their books his doctrine has developed to an astonishing length, as the

following passage from the Agni Purāna will show. The man must be very sanguine who entertains the hope "in far-off years" to attain to absorption into the Supreme Brahma.

"A person who loses human birth passes through 8,000,000 births amongst inferior creatures before he can appear again on earth as a human being. Of these he remains 2,100,000 among the immovable parts of creation, as stones, trees, etc.; 900,000 amongst the watery tribes; 1,000,000 amongst insects, worms, etc.; 1,000,000 amongst birds; and 3,000,000 amongst the beasts. In the ascending scale, *if his works be suitable*, he lives 400,000 lives amongst the lower castes of men, and 100 amongst Brāhmans. After this he may obtain absorption into Brahma." *

The belief in a succession of lives for each individual is universal amongst the Hindus, though they freely admit that they bring with them no memory of their past experience. When a parent is distracted with sorrow at loss of a child, or when his business does not prosper, or tribulation of any kind falls upon him, his first thought is, Which of the gods have I offended? What religious duty have I neglected? If nothing specially sinful can be remembered, the reflection comes that the trouble must be a punishment for sin committed in a former birth. This idea must tend to make them careless in morals. Their present condition may be a reward for good conduct, or a punishment for evil. Who can tell? And in conversation with learned and ignorant, priest and people, when speaking of the future, I have received only one answer to the question, What will be your condition in your next life? With sorrow and pain, they reply, "God knows; we cannot say.

* "Ward," vol. iii. p. 324.

If our present life is good, we shall be happy; if evil, we shall be miserable;" but whether they have reason for hope or fear, they are unable to say. No word of the gospel meets the wants of the Hindu more than this: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." The assurance that the Christian has of forgiveness of sin, and the certain hope of blessedness in heaven, is one of the most attractive words the Christian can offer to the Hindu.

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